

GERALD L. K. SMITH SPEAKS AT "CROSS ROADS":  
A SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY IN PUBLIC OPINION

By

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Foreword

The author would like to express her sincere appreciation to Dr. Hans Gerth for his invaluable suggestions and criticisms regarding the analysis of the material and to Richard Hornseth for his aid in the statistical analysis of the data, and finally to my husband who conducted the interviewing of the young men in "Cross Roads".

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## INTRODUCTION

In the November 1947 issue of The Cross and the Flag, Gerald L. K. Smith commented, "Whenever you are faced with some evil propaganda concerning that man Smith, just remind your informer that there is no place in America where Gerald L. K. Smith is more welcome than in the town where he grew up, among his old neighbors."

This little city of 3,800 people located in the hills of southwestern Wisconsin celebrated its centennial anniversary in August 1946, and had as the main attraction of the Centennial a speech by its 'Native Son,' Gerald Smith. A year later he was invited home again to receive a diamond ring as a token of the Centennial Committee's gratitude and appreciation.

That same summer of 1947 a study was conducted among 58 young men who were residents of "Cross Roads," a fictitious name for Smith's hometown.<sup>1</sup> One of the major purposes of the project was to determine the attitude of these men toward Gerald Smith and to uncover significant factors that would explain their particular reactions. Although the information gleaned from the interviews, newspaper publicity and the speech itself has severe limitations for assaying the precise

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1. See Vidich, Arthur J. The American Success Dilemma, (M. A. Thesis: University of Wisconsin, 1948).



influence of Smith's talk (since there was no opportunity to administer a before and after test), nevertheless, the data do suggest some interesting hypotheses concerning audience reaction to an agitator's appeals and its relation to community attitudes and newspaper publicity for setting a frame of reference. In order to deal adequately with this problem certain background information about the 1946 Cross Roads Centennial is essential.

During the first week of July, Smith was visited in Madison, Wisconsin by two old-time high school friends from Cross Roads, who also happened to be members of the Centennial Committee. On this visit they arranged to secure Smith as the keynote speaker for the celebration of August 18, a fact which was kept secret from the citizens of Cross Roads until the next Monday when a Madison newspaper published news of the invitation. This news set in motion a major community controversy and pressure from various citizens was exerted to have the Committee rescind the invitation. Two days later a meeting of the executive committee of the Chamber of Commerce was called at which only 4 of the 11 members were present. Their decision was unanimous against permitting Gerald L. K. Smith the opportunity to appear on the program. However, five days later another meeting of the committee was called at which the vote was 9 to 2 in favor of retaining Smith as the keynote centennial speaker.

The centennial chairman's comment was, "Gerald Smith is a homeboy and we have no right to deny him the right to come home to speak. The committee did not feel that the contract with Mr. Smith should be broken. Things look different to people here and we are going ahead with our plans, so help me!" He added, "We have a different feeling about Gerald Smith in Cross Roads. He is a homeboy and we want to hear him. He is entitled to the same consideration as anyone else as long as he is out of jail. I can stand it even if he says something I don't like."<sup>2</sup>

Following this decision, the Committee was under vigorous attack by the state press, a state Congressman and various state organizations, such as the National Conference of Christians and Jews, the CIO and AF of L of La Crosse and two posts of the American Legion. A Minneapolis Lutheran minister cancelled his appearance because he was "unwilling to be confused in any way with Mr. Smith's avowed Fascist views, which are directly contrary to my philosophy of Americanism."<sup>3</sup> And the Catholic priest of Cross Roads announced in a newspaper advertisement that he would refuse to have any part in "anything which involves the propagation of hate toward any individual. May God destroy communism, but God love every person regardless of race, creed or color."<sup>4</sup>

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2. Capital Times, July 18, 1946.

3. LaCrosse Tribune, July 28, 1946.

4. Capital Times, August 10, 1946.

According to an article in the LaCrosse Tribune, what amazed and confused the people of Cross Roads was the fact that most of the objections to inviting Gerald L.K. Smith came from other cities. The jeweler, a former classmate of Smith's said, "Most of us here have not had a chance to see and hear Gerald since he has become a national figure. Many people I have talked to want to hear what he has to say before they make up their minds about his beliefs."<sup>5</sup> The other member who arranged the invitation for Smith to speak at the celebration commented, "We're just trying to put on a little better than average celebration to commemorate the city's 100th birthday anniversary. We believe we have the biggest little city of 4,000 population on the face of the map and we are interested in attracting people from Iowa, Minnesota, LaCrosse and other surrounding communities to our birthday party. It is a shame we have to be plagued by this opposition."<sup>6</sup>

Alarmed by the increasing publicity and opposition to Smith's forthcoming appearance at the Centennial, the Committee decided that some type of positive face-saving action was necessary. Someone suggested that a letter be written to Henry Ford, inquiring as to his opinion of Gerald L.K. Smith. Ford replied in his letter that he approved of Smith and supported his program. Although these interesting details never

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5. LaCrosse Tribune, July 18, 1946.

6. Ibid.

reached the hands of the newspaper reporters, the story of Henry Ford's letter was rumored around town and was used by the Committee as a means for cloaking their decision with an air of respectability.

While the issue was being hotly discussed throughout the state the general chairman of the centennial, a former state assemblyman and one-time member of the Ku Klux Klan, stated to the press, "If there is any disturbance from now on it will come from the outside, not from Cross Roads."<sup>7</sup> Yet numerous reports gave credence to the belief that all was not "quiet and peaceful" in Smith's hometown.

Reporters from the LaCrosse Tribune interviewed Cross Roads residents and this poll indicated that of 15 persons questioned, nine were not in favor of Smith, two were indifferent, and only four wanted him. Answering the question "Are you aware of any opposition at the present time to bring Smith Here?" 11 persons said "Yes" and four "No." One-third of the same group declared they would support an effort to oppose the appearance of Smith as a speaker, four were undecided and the remaining eight agreed to let matters rest as they were.

Some of the highlight comments obtained in the interviews included:<sup>8</sup>

"Every knock is a boost so I do not think the criticism of Smith will detract from the Centennial one bit."

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7. Ibid., July 31, 1946.

8. Ibid., August 7, 1946.

"....don't make one helluva lot of difference one way or t'other. It will hurt a little having him here and may cause a little trouble. He dassn't say anything out of the way or there will be."

"Don't believe in anything he stands for, but the majority rules. If most of the people want him, he should come."

"From a business point of view, having the radical sonavagun come here is swell but I'm afraid he'll live up to his reputation and bust up the whole thing by not staying in line."

"I believe those opposed want to hear him as well as the others."

"I'm certainly not proud of the fact that he's from Cross Roads and can't see any reason on earth why we should publicize it....He's my idea of a poor citizen."

"I'm so pleased Gerald is coming."

On August 7 an eleventh hour appeal to prevent Gerald Smith from speaking on the Centennial program was made by a local Catholic dentist at a meeting of the executive committee. But to avoid a public decision adjournment of the regular committee session was rushed. The centennial chairman and another member walked off in a huff immediately following the vote for adjournment. The former stated belligerently, "I'm not going to listen to any more about Smith. I've heard all I'm going to hear about him." While the dentist made his plea to the remaining group, quoting extracts from the book "Undercover," one member of this committee, also an old buddy of Smith's stated, "We've heard so much about that guy, we're getting tired of it!" and the speaker countered, "And so are

a lot of other people."<sup>9</sup>

This same day a group of three women, in a last-stand effort to take the pulse of opinion in Cross Roads concerning the appearance of Gerald Smith, conducted a poll throughout three blocks of Cross Roads' street. One of the women, a Catholic, was the wife of the local dentist; another, a protestant, was a garage dealer's wife; and the third member, Jewish, was the wife of a local clothing merchant. They circulated three petitions among local business men which read "I want Gerald Smith to come," "I don't want him," and "It doesn't make any difference." The results of the survey showed that those against Smith's appearance held an overwhelming majority - 132 against, 39 indifferent, and 13 were in favor of his appearance. The women also appealed to several groups in the community to take action in favor of opposing the committee's invitation. One of the groups contacted, the local American Legion Post, adopted a resolution disapproving of Smith's appearance because "the American Legion has always been opposed to all forms of un-Americanism, racial and religious intolerance, bigotry and prejudice."<sup>10</sup> The Veterans of Foreign Wars preferred to remain neutral on the question and abide by the Centennial Committee's decision.

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9. LaCrosse Tribune, August 7, 1946.

10. Ibid., August 15, 1946.

But in spite of pressure from an articulate minority in the community, comprised of a prominent wealthy druggist, the County Judge, a dentist, two or three small businessmen and a few civic-minded housewives, the majority of the committee remained adamant in their refusal to rescind the invitation. Their attitude was to underrate the extent of opposition sentiment. One of the men who first contacted Smith in Madison, the jeweler, stated, "All the people I have spoken to except two understand the committee's reason for wanting Gerald Smith to speak here. They realize that he was educated here and that some of the committee were classmates of his. I, for one, do not believe all the criticism and opposition to him. Gerald has assured me in personal letters that he is not un-American and that his fight is to stop the spread of communism."<sup>11</sup> Another committee member, owner of a hardware store and old friend of Smith's, stated, "Gerald Smith is both praised and condemned by responsible men to such an extent that I want to be able to judge for myself."<sup>12</sup>

The LaCrosse Trades and Labor of the A.F. of L. Council issued a statement to the effect that they were "very definitely opposed to Gerald L.K. Smith and all that he represents. Our own investigations have proved beyond doubt that the invitation extended to Smith was not by action, or even approval of the community as a whole, but rather by a minority group."<sup>13</sup>

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11. Ibid., August 6, 1946.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., August 7, 1946.

The CIO local union 396 and political action committee of LaCrosse stated their opposition in these terms: "Gerald L.K. Smith's doctrines of hate, bigotry and intolerance are repugnant to every thinking American. The Cross Roads committee states that it has invited him because he is a local boy who has received nationwide publicity. By this logic, they would have issued a similar invitation to John Dillinger or Adolph Hitler had they been born in Cross Roads."<sup>14</sup>

The statement of these labor groups in opposition to Smith helped incite a rumor that union members from LaCrosse would try to break up Smith's meeting. The general chairman admitted to newspapermen that he had received telephone calls from persons opposing the appearance of Smith, but he scoffed at out-of-town threats to break up the meeting. "Sure a few telephoned me," he said. "I don't know who they were, but I told them to come along, as the jail was only half a block away." One village official said the right of free speech was at stake and recommended that "other cities keep their noses clean and we'll keep ours clean."<sup>15</sup>

The recent news that Gerald Smith had been foiled by pickets, police and hotel management in an attempt to address a meeting of the 'Republican Nationalists' in Chicago added fuel to the growing rumor that Cross Roads could expect

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14. Ibid.

15. Capital Times, August 17, 1946.



trouble from opposition groups. And the excitement of the community was not entirely negative. The controversy was felt to be good for business. To allay fears and anxieties of the community police officials reported that at least 50 persons had been deputized to handle auxiliary police duties during the centennial, and that they planned to add another hundred in view of the disturbance created by Smith's appearance in Chicago, August 14.

Attitudes of curiosity and interest toward the Hometown Boy were encouraged by the barrage of newspaper publicity, state and community opposition. It was, in the words of one young man, "the biggest thing that ever hit Cross Roads."

On Friday, Gerald Smith returned home and in honor of the occasion, his old buddies gave him a steak dinner. The next day reporters from several state newspapers interviewed Smith. Adopting the role of the hometown boy who had made good and returned home to receive the acclaim of the multitude, Smith adroitly steered clear of political issues, preferring to reminisce on his youthful days when he was a high school orator, track star and editor of the school annual. When questioned about politics he expressed his views by saying he disagreed with "minorities being persecuted in America" as violently as "having minorities running America." The Tribune reporter commented, "A powerful personality, he expressed his love for Wisconsin on several occasions with a 'special"

feeling for this part of the state."<sup>16</sup>

Smith's speech was scheduled for 2:30 Sunday afternoon in the city park. By early afternoon a large audience had gathered for the much publicized event. The size of the crowd was estimated by various people between 7,000 and 24,000, a conservative guess being about 10,000.<sup>17</sup> Police officers - some 50 of them from the surrounding counties, augmented by state motor vehicle men and sheriff's deputies - were scattered throughout the crowd to insure order. A reporter from the LaCrosse Tribune commented that most of the audience "had heard of Smith and either wanted to see him or be around when and if any fireworks developed. But there were no demonstrations, nor a threat of any, for that matter. There wasn't any commotion as the Smith party walked into the pavilion about 2:30 p.m. and took chairs on the elevated platform. There wasn't any disturbance when the speaker was introduced by the Centennial Committee chairman. In fact, it was an orderly crowd that thronged Eckhart Park for one of the high-lights of the closing day's centennial celebration program. Batteries of loud speakers were strategically located to carry the program to all parts of the recreation center. In fact, residents within a radius of several blocks of the park enjoyed the program from the comfort of easy chairs on their porches....They had no trouble with the crowd which seemed to be attentive through-

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16. LaCrosse Tribune, August 18, 1946.

17. Ibid.

out the talk by the America First Leader. There was frequent applause during the talk, which Smith encouraged with such remarks as, "If you believe in this like I do, give it a real hand." And when the oratory was over, the crowd literally mobbed Smith and his party. With Smith and his wife standing on the platform, the spectators milled for more than 40 minutes around the pavilion trying to greet the speaker and shake hands. Gradually, then, the crowd broke up and the Smith party tried to walk from the park, only to be the center of attraction by group after group enroute to their automobiles."<sup>18</sup>

As for the speech itself the reporter stated, "He was at his oratorical best and expounded for more than one hour on a subject far from controversial, 'Cross Roads - the True Symbol of the American Way of Life' ... He stirred up no fuss at either the park or the church, taking only occasional healthy pokes at the communists."<sup>19</sup>

The Capital Times reporter, more skeptical of Smith, wrote, "Gerald L.K. Smith, 'America First' leader, came back to his town in the role of 'the old hometown boy', the home-spun philosopher and the 'much-maligned' man who hates communists, worships God, adores his wife and has abiding love for all mankind.

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18. Ibid., August 19, 1946.

19. Ibid.

"Ostensibly casting off his mantle as a political prophet, Smith devoted most of his address...to fulsome praise of his '1,000 cousins up and down the Kickapoo Valley' and to the 'Garden of Eden that is Vernon County.' But in his 'non-political' hour-and-a-half address, during which he waved his arms and orated with Billy Sunday eloquence Smith diverged several times to assail the 'Stalin-loving communists who are taking over your state university,' to deride Secretary of Commerce Henry A. Wallace for 'slaughtering the little pigs that would have been the great grandfathers of the pork chops you can't get today' and to thank the Capital Times for 'advertising my appearance here so well.'"<sup>20</sup>

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20. Capital Times, August 19, 1946.

## II

## NEWSPAPER PUBLICITY

Prior to the newspaper publicity of the Cross Roads controversy, most residents in the community were generally unaware of and disinterested in Gerald L.K. Smith. Some knew and remembered him as the boy in knee breeches who took up debating in the old red school building, but, as a LaCrosse Tribune editorial stated, whether they knew of "the man in long trousers who took up orating on the nation's soap boxes is open to question...Curiosity more than tribute to a native son seems the basis for the invitation."<sup>1</sup> Because of this general unawareness of Smith's political affiliations, we might assume that the newspaper publicity would have an important effect in both conditioning anticipant attitudes toward the 'hometown boy' and in strengthening or weakening ties of identification with the Centennial Committee. Therefore it would seem relevant to examine in more detail the type of newspaper publicity which was given the centennial controversy.

For practical purposes only two newspapers were used in the analysis - the LaCrosse Tribune, a conservative Republican newspaper and most widely read of all papers in Cross Roads;

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1. LaCrosse Tribune, July 27, 1946.

and the Capital Times of Madison, a rabidly Progressive-Democratic state newspaper edited by a Norwegian, a strong LaFollette supporter, who has considerable prestige among his own ethnic group in Vernon County. Because of their wide circulation within Cross Roads and the surrounding rural area, these two newspapers should provide sufficient information regarding the probable effect of papers as molders of public opinion.

Certain questions, then, are immediately posed: How much prominence was given to stories relating to Gerald L.K. Smith? What were the general themes that dominated the publicity as revealed by newspaper headlines? What was the editorial position of the respective newspapers toward Smith? More specifically, how did they identify him in their stories and editorials?

#### Prominence of Stories

The Capital Times published ten stories and four editorials regarding Gerald L.K. Smith and his appearance at the Cross Roads Centennial in the period from July 8 to August 19, 1946. These were the only stories published in the paper pertaining to the Centennial. All of the news stories except two appeared on the front page; four of them receiving large headlines, and five of them had medium headlines. Two pictures of Smith and his wife, and of Smith and the Centennial crowd were printed.

On the other hand, the LaCrosse Tribune in the period from July 7 to August 19, 1946 published 16 news stories and three editorials regarding Mr. Smith. Over half of the stories appeared on the first page of the paper, one was printed on the second, one on the sixth page and five appeared in Section II of the Tribune, the section devoted to news of the surrounding communities. Eight of the stories received top billing in headlines, five had medium headlines and three had small print headlines. Sixteen of the 30 news stories devoted to the Cross Roads Centennial pertained to Smith. One picture accompanied these stories.

Such a cursory analysis demonstrates the news value of Smith for these papers. By and large the 'hometown boy' was worthy of front page coverage, of large headlines, and of editorial attention.

Although the Capital Times gave more prominence to Gerald L. K. Smith in terms of front page stories, the LaCrosse Tribune published more news about the man and his part in the Cross Roads controversy. Also, by printing one-third of their stories in the section of the paper pertaining to Cross Roads news, the Tribune was assured of a Cross Roads readership, as much as if they had published all their stories on the first page. However, it should be pointed out that whereas the Capital Times coverage of the Cross Roads Centennial exclusively focused on the Gerald L.K. Smith controversy, the LaCrosse Tribune in its publicity of the Centennial devoted

only a little over half of the articles to Gerald L.K. Smith.

#### General News Themes

A cursory analysis of the headlines of both papers reveals the general news themes which were played up in connection with publicity of Gerald L.K. Smith and his appearance at the Centennial. All of the headlines of the Capital Times emphasized the theme of public opposition toward the man. For example, their typical headlines read:

Gerald Smith Invited to Speak at Centennial at  
Cross Roads; City in Uproar.

NCCJ Oppose Smith Talk at Cross Roads' Fete.

Vote to Bar Smith Address at Cross Roads'  
Centennial. Committee is Unanimously  
Against Talk by America Firster.

Priest Shuns Cross Roads' Fete Due to Smith.

Smith Talk Is Spotlighted at Cross Roads'  
Fete; Rumor Labor Groups In Threat to  
Break Up America Firster's Meet.

Move to Ban Smith Talk at Cross Roads Fails;  
America First Leader to Appear at  
Centennial Despite Opposition.

Whether such headlines would be interpreted as depreciatory or indulgent of Smith would, of course, depend on the political attitude of the reader. Logically, a 'liberal' predisposed against Smith would react unfavorably to the Centennial Committee which insisted on bringing Gerald L.K. Smith to Cross Roads and would be pleased that other groups were opposing his invitation. However, other people, either favorable to Smith or unaware of his political career, might



react in an opposite manner. That is, they might feel that opposition groups were stirring up needless trouble and giving the town a 'black eye'. Then, instead of reacting against Smith and the committee's action, they would blame the newspapers, labor unions and religious groups for creating trouble. Although the Capital Times' obvious intention was to depreciate Smith and the Centennial Committee by playing up such specialized news themes, there was no guarantee that the newspaper readership would react in such a manner.

In the case of the LaCrosse Tribune only half of the sixteen headlines featured reports of opposition to Smith and to the committee's action. Typical of these headlines were the following:

Minneapolis Pastor Cancels Cross Roads Talk;  
Blames G.L.K. Smith

Map Strategy to Stop Appearance of Gerald L.K.  
Smith at Cross Roads; Group Wants Smith  
Removal

Same Old Story!  
Appeal to Ban Smith Talk Fails  
Dr. A.E. Kuehn Takes Stand to Voice  
'Citizen' Protest

Cross Roads Group Conducts Poll; Majority Votes  
Against Smith

Not Welcome!  
Cross Roads Legion Post Opposed  
G.L.K. Smith Centennial Talk

To evaluate these headlines a priori as depreciatory, neutral or indulgent of Smith without reference to the readers' sympathies and predispositions is of little analyt-

ical value. For example, the headline announcing that the Minneapolis pastor canceled his Cross Roads talk might boomerang against the pastor, certain people feeling that that was none of his business. Or they might resent the Legion post's interference.

Two of the Tribune headlines concerned the news of Smith's reception in Cross Roads. They read as follows:

Gerald Smith Back Home, Skips Politics.  
Big Amiable, Gerald L.K. Smith Is Back  
Home Again

Cross Roads Opens Arms to Smith;  
'Boy Orator' Makes Most of Celebration

Although the editor's choice of words in the headlines was indulgent of Smith, the 'liberal' leader might resent the reference to 'big amiable Gerald L.K. Smith' or to take issue with the fact, as cited in headline, that 'Cross Roads opens arms to Smith'.

The three remaining headlines were more value-neutral, in the sense that editorial bias was not definitely indicated. They concerned news announcing the committee's decision to allow Smith to speak at the Centennial. For example:

Gerald L.K. Smith, Native Son, on Cross Roads  
Program; Stormy America First Leader to  
Give Address

Cross Roads Committee Determined to Have Gerald  
Smith; 'Way of Life' is Talk Theme

Centennial Group Continues With Plan

Thus, in terms of general news themes, the headlines of the Capital Times played up the angle of public opposition to

Smith more than those headlines of the Tribune. However, both papers by selective attention to certain news themes attempted to convey to the reader a negative impression of the man, i.e. his exclusion or isolation from respectable society.

Editorial Position of the Newspapers  
Toward Smith and Committee

In addition to the above mentioned fact of negative slanting of headlines toward Smith, the editorial position of both papers was strongly against the former leader of the America First party. However, the LaCrosse Tribune was more chummy in its denouncement of the committee's action than the Capital Times, which followed the line of ridicule and blame.

An editorial of July 19 states: "The Capital Times is shocked, as will be thousands of Wisconsin residents, to hear that the official committee of the Cross Roads centennial has reversed a previous decision and will go through with the plan to have Gerald L.K. Smith, fascist-minded leader of the America First party, speak at its centennial celebration, August 17 and 18.

"We frankly confess that we can't understand how the members of the committee are so willing to give their community a black-eye in the estimation of the people, not only of this state, but of the nation as a whole. Certainly the members of the committee cannot be aware of this man's reputation throughout the nation.

"His activities before and during the war won for him the censure of every reputable newspaper in the country. Even the Chicago Tribune refuses to claim him.

"But despite the fact that every decent person everywhere is horrified at Smith, the city of Cross Roads has invited him to take a prominent part in a civic function. The upshot of this mistake is bound to result in Cross Roads being pointed out for years as the community which sponsored Gerald L.K. Smith as part of a centennial celebration...

"It is tragic to note the manner in which the centennial committee has gone about handling the Smith affair. The committee members voted to bring the race-baiting rabble rouser to Cross Roads by secret ballot so that no one would know who favored his appearance. They did not dare to take action openly...

"We deeply regret seeing the city of Cross Roads, with its fine tradition of Americanism, doing itself a disservice which will take years to overcome."<sup>2</sup>

Another editorial in the Capital Times referred to a beard growing contest which was to be part of Cross Roads centennial. The editorial asks: "Is this to cover up the red faces of those citizens who have been embarrassed by the centennial committee's action in inviting Gerald L.K. Smith to speak?"<sup>3</sup>

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2. Capital Times, July 19, 1946.

3. Ibid., August 12, 1946.

An editorial in the LaCrosse Tribune termed Curiosity or Tribute states its position toward Smith in unequivocal terms:

"Democracy abhors every political and economic and rabble-rousing thing for which Gerald L.K. Smith stands. This demagogue tramping up and down the American scene, preaching disunity and inciting racial and religious hatred has been issued a controversial invitation to speak at Cross Roads' centennial celebration.

"Under identical rules of a democracy which give the Gerald Smiths freedom of movement, Cross Roads' choice of an anniversary speaker is quite properly within the sphere of its own decision...A native of the solidly and typically American community of Cross Roads, Gerald Smith must be seen as standing in complete antipathy before a gathering of centennial celebrants whose conception of democracy nurtures the tolerance he forbids..."<sup>4</sup>

Another editorial Must Gerald Be the Theme? states more explicitly the attitude of the paper toward the committee's action.

"The utter distress of many people of Cross Roads at the prospect of Gerald L.K. Smith's appearance at the centennial next month is beginning to be heard above the persistence and determination of his sponsors.

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4. LaCrosse Tribune, July 27, 1946.

"This is Cross Roads' centennial year. Much had been made of it in preparation, and properly so. There were visions of warm and friendly gatherings of town and country folk, of people who had lived together and worked out a community of which they could be justifiably proud. This had been the conception, indeed, in Cross Roads, on the occasion of its centennial anniversary. But apparently it is to be denied by the injection of a Fascist who got his Fascism, not from his roots in the community, but after he had shaken the good Vernon County soil from his heels.

"Those in Cross Roads opposed to this arrangement look upon the centennial as having been erected by means of the Smith tentpole driven in the center first, around which the remaining ceremonies were to fall in complete submission and find place as best possible.

"And when that center pole is a mast of racial and religious hatred, symbol of disunity and demagogery with few if any equals in the nation, it is small wonder that Cross Roads is sore distressed at the circumstance which presumes to be the centennial it had dreamed of back yonder.

"If the central theme in this panorama is the rise of Gerald Smith to the notoriety he enjoys, then he belongs to the centennial. Forbid that it is, as we know in the heart of Cross Roads it is not.

"The simple solution is that Cross Roads need not have Gerald Smith if it wishes not to have him. It can say to those at

the helm, this shall not be. And when said with full resonance, it would not be."<sup>5</sup>

In summary we may say that both newspapers made their position toward Gerald L.K. Smith very explicit, and both papers attempted to convey to the readers in Cross Roads the theme that an invitation to Smith was a misfortune for the community. The Capital Times, however, was more explicit in condemning rather than excusing, the Centennial Committee's action.

#### Labeling of Smith

It is also possible to classify the publicity according to the way in which the stories and editorials referred to Gerald Smith and his political activities. For example, sixty-six of the labels were descriptive of his affiliations; thirty-five terms were descriptive of his ideas; and thirty-five references described Smith's personality.

The terms referring to Smith's affiliations included the following: 'leader of America First Party' or 'America Firster'; 'Native Son', 'hometown boy', 'former resident'; 'leader of so-called America First party'; leader of 'intensely isolationist', 'irresponsible' and 'race-baiting' America First party; and 'member of Silver Shirts'. Those labels descriptive of Smith's ideas included: 'race-baiter', 'hate-monger', 'spokesman for anti-semitism, intolerance', etc.; 'fascist-minded'; 'preacher of disunity'; and 'un-American'. The

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5. Ibid., July 30, 1946.

references to Smith's personality were such labels as 'rabble-rouser' and 'demagogue'; 'notorious politician' and 'controversial figure'; 'nationally prominent'; 'loud and loquacious'; 'amiable, genial and powerful personality'; 'poor citizen', 'lacks shame and responsibility'; 'brilliant orator'; and 'aspires to be dictator'.

The labels which occurred most frequently in the two papers were, in order of frequency, 'leader of America First Party'; 'Native Son' or 'hometown boy'; 'race-baiter' or 'hate-monger'; 'rabble-rouser'; 'leader of so-called America First party'; 'notorious' and 'nationally prominent'. The Capital Times never referred to Gerald L.K. Smith as a 'native son' and only used the term 'hometown boy' in quotes. Also the Times preferred the use of irony to a direct identification, i.e., 'so-called America First party'. In addition, this paper took greater liberties in editorial biasing of news stories than the Tribune, which confined most of its negative references to Smith to direct quotes from opposition groups or to a straight editorial. It must be noted, however, that both papers, by their various references to Smith, intended to convey to the reader a predominantly negative impression of the man and his party, especially since such labels as 'native son' would be often joined to a phrase like 'now noted for his rabble-rousing tactics'.

One of the most interesting facts revealed by a content analysis of the newspaper publicity is the absence of any



'educational' feature story on the career of Gerald L.K. Smith or of a factual report on the activities of the America First party. The Capital Times particularly, in an attempt to 'smear' Smith, employed the technique of labels and sensational headlines. The reader was never given an opportunity by either paper to soberly judge the facts pertaining to Smith and his party. On the contrary, he was exposed to only one-sided hystericized descriptions which offered him no basis for evaluating the truth or falsity of the opposition's accusations. In short, these newspapers largely relied on labels, smears and sensationalism for 'informing' the reader rather than on sober factual reporting and honest instructive journalism.

## III

## THE CENTENNIAL SPEECH OF GERALD L. K. SMITH

To evaluate clearly the influence of Mr. Smith's oratory on the centennial audience it is necessary to analyze the content of his speech. Fortunately, we can rely on more than newspaper accounts since a court reporter was present to record verbatim Mr. Smith's remarks.

One feature which distinguishes this particular speech of Gerald L.K. Smith from his usual political addresses was his attempt to reestablish himself in the eyes of Cross Roads as a respectable and worthy Native Son. The theme of the speech - "Cross Roads - the True Symbol of the American Way of Life" underscores the primary group values of a rural community, values which were being threatened by secular 'un-American' forces - i.e., atheism, cynicism, communism and Hollywood. Thus, in his attempt to identify himself with the community, Smith also tried to delineate, in a more subtle manner, that the same groups who hate Smith also hate Cross Roads, the last fortress of traditional American values. By equating the values of a small town with true Americanism, Smith attempted to place the audience on his side.

To achieve his purpose of returning to the fold as the lost sheep, Smith adroitly used various devices. For example, he played on the family theme, with constant references to his wife, mother, father, son and 'thousand cousins'. The image

he painted was of the traditional middle class rural family with preserved patriarchal structure. He recounted stories of his boyhood days in Cross Roads to demonstrate that he was bound to that region by ties of friendship, belief, tradition and blood, a nativist appeal to 'blood and soil'. He made continual references to the Bible and to 'old-fashioned' Christianity, thus appealing to rural middle-class morality with its emphasis on fundamentalism, and he sounded the Scandinavian motive, also calculated to win approval from a largely Norwegian community.

The principal appeals used by Smith in his hour and half address may be roughly classified as follows: Appeals to local sentiments and pride (Cross Roads as 'the garden spot of the nation' and the 'true symbol of the American Way of Life'. This was essentially a glorification of the 'we-group' as opposed to all 'out-groups', and was embellished by references to pride in the soil); Appeals to a rural frame of reference (respect and honor for tradition, the old ways of the pioneers, as against the non-conformist urban immigrants who are an object of distrust; an emphasis on hard work as against the 'something-for-nothing' philosophy of the New Deal; a faith in unrestricted abundance of the earth, all-out production, rather than restrictive measures of bureaucratic control and rationing; an emphasis on strong parental authority and discipline as opposed to 'progressive' measures which spoiled youth; the 'old-fashioned fundamentalist approach

to the Bible' and to Christianity as opposed to liberal 'modern' theories, that bred unchurched people - atheists and communists); and finally, the general appeals to a nativist nationalism. (The heritage of America was built by God-fearing pioneers, people like those in Cross Roads, and the threat to its future will come from the alien non-Christian elements - communists, atheists, Hollywood, foreigners, Jews and all types of progressives who will trade America's sovereignty for one big Super-State, the UNO. The appeal is essentially to selfishness - 'to hell with the outer world', veterans get theirs first, and America should keep her dollars at home. In addition, this appeal is an incitement to unrest, and unusual uneasiness against strangers (Jews), hence an exploitation of xenophobic intolerance.

The total implication of these appeals is to undermine trust in the control centers of modern society, to heighten and exploit rural and small town phobias and frustrations, and to deflect latent aggression from the true source points and direct it instead against the rest of the world - e.g., communists, aliens, atheists, intellectuals, Jews.

These appeals, sufficiently omnibus in their nature to touch on some valuation of everyone in a rural middle-class community, were heightened in their effect by the dramatic oratory of Smith, who, as a skillful charismatic leader, could capitalize on the sentiments of an audience and at the same time build himself into heroic proportions as the martyr, the prophet and the friend. Also, one must note the paranoid

egocentricity of his remarks, his continual references to himself.

#### Appeals to Local Sentiment and Pride

As an adept speaker Smith knew the value of praise and oratory for charming an audience. His speech was sprinkled with references to the beauty of Cross Roads: "this beautiful emerald country of hills sweeping back into these dairyland areas" - "this beautiful ground which refreshes our memory so vividly of our old home" - "this beautiful Cross Roads, seen like a silvery diamond set in the sky...this is indeed the most beautiful place on earth."

He assured the audience that he had "an intelligent realization of the richness of this country, - rich in intelligence, rich in background, rich in tradition, rich in soil, rich in the high appreciation of those things on which our nation has been founded."

For Cross Roads' pioneers, men like Moses Decker and Smith's own grandfather, Smith was full of praise and admiration, extolling their contribution as Christian God-fearing citizens. Mindful of the Scandinavian influx into the region in the late 80's, Smith was also careful to mention their role in Cross Roads' history.

Yet while praising the contribution which Vernon County for the past hundred years had made to the 'American Way of Life' (an example of a neat psychological trick of paying spurious deference to the audience), Smith focussed on those

groups who threatened this 'Way of Life'.

"It is only people like you that can save America. Within the past ten years our country, - our great cities have been flooded with people who do not love America enough to join her churches; who don't love America enough to seek honorable citizenship; who don't love America enough to learn her language. They love Joe Stalin more than they do George Washington and alien ideology more than the tradition and Christianity on which our nation was founded. They have money, power, propaganda; they are ruthless...It's going to take Cross Roads and Viola and Coon Valley and Soldiers' Grove and Liberty Pole and Richland Center and all the rest to save America."

The technique used by Smith is typical and effective demagogery - identifying the audience with all that is good and true Americanism and then placing in opposition to it all groups who hold different - i.e. 'secular' values, thereby making them un-American out-groups and potential threats to the values of the rural group whom he is addressing. Thus he gave expression to the fear of 'primary groups' under threat of money, power and propaganda (symbols of urbanism) and by identifying primary group values with America assigned the rural group a savior function, the mission to keep America pure and unsullied from alien influences.

Appeals to Rural Frame of Reference

The virtues which Smith claimed as belonging especially to Cross Roads were those values of a sacred rural society:-- respect and honor for tradition; a strong fundamentalist emphasis on the Bible; a respect for diligence, hard work, and strong family discipline. Thus in urging the return to the past Smith was appealing to the traditional values of a rural society, a society with which he was very familiar.

God-fearing Christianity of Pioneers	Peppered throughout the speech were references to the sturdy pioneers who came to the community "in order that they might plant the cross beside the cotton and worship with freedom...They came as priest and preacher, as pioneers, as mothers with child in womb and child in arms to plant the cross beside the mill, as they moved through the forest with musket in one hand and Bible in the other."
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Fundamentalist Christianity vs. University (locale of cynics and atheists)	Typical of Smith's numerous references to the Bible and his emphasis on 'old-fashioned Christianity' is the following excerpt: "I am going to take a text for my address this afternoon because I still believe in my mother's Bible; not part of it, not just one chapter, not just a few chosen texts to satisfy the cynics and atheists of some of our tax-supported universities; but I <u>believe</u> in my mother's Bible, which is the inspired word of God. I believe in what Jesus Christ told
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about in that Bible, who is the Son of God, not just the great philosopher, not just a nice panty-waist instructor - but the son of God, the revelation of divine truth to mankind."

Smith quickly let the audience know that he was proud of the fact that his mother "was an old-fashioned Christian church member and I still have that faith," thus showing he had no use for a modern liberal version of religion, providing comfort to insecure provincialism. He went on to comment, "Some people think you have to apologize for everything you stand for in order to be broadminded in this world. We have too many broad-minded people in this world!"

Family  
Altar

Smith also extolled the virtue of the family altar, "one of the attributes that practically none of you have any more, which was a part of America ...I owe more to that family altar than to anything in this world...We don't do that in the little school houses any more. The scientific cynics and high sounding atheists on your universities would really kill anyone who offered that prayer in a science room or class room. We have become more intelligent than the Man of Gallilee; more scientific than Christ, who founded this world, this universe."

Rigid  
Discipline  
vs.  
Progressive  
Education

The virtues which Gerald L.K. Smith memorialized included more than the love of the pioneer for his God, his Bible, family altar and his country's constitution. Smith also appealed to the



old ways of family discipline, emphasizing obedience rather than freedom.

"You and I as the beneficiaries and the heirs of men and women who believed that we 'seek the Kingdom of Heaven and all these things shall be added unto you' - we had discipline in the schools, we had discipline in the homes, and a boy was supposed to mind his father and daughter was supposed to do what Mother told her to do...But we have a system of progressive instructors, they call it 'progressive educational system'. I love the word 'progressive' but it has been distorted and mystified by the educators who call their plan progressive, that no child must be curbed. No child must be denied any of his natural proclivities. If he wants to run his fist through the mashed potatoes on Sunday, let him do it.

"I know I am old-fashioned, but I was told by my father, and these progressive educators may not like it - but he said, 'Son, as long as you put your feet under my table and eat the food I earned by the sweat of my brow, you are going to do what I tell you to do'."

Virtue of  
Hard Work  
vs.  
Unemployment  
Insurance,  
i.e. fraud

In the preceding excerpts one can note his appeal to 'old-fashioned' virtues which he posed against progressivism, a distortion of values imposed by the urban mentality, the professional men and experts. Smith also railed against the type of secular mentality bred by the New Deal that allegedly expects something for nothing. He cited the story of a

secretary who resigned her job and then requested a letter from her boss, which would state in effect that he had fired her, thereby allowing her to collect unemployment insurance. "We were taught we were supposed to work," he moralized. 'Let's be careful of these little treacheries that they don't lower our self-respect.'

The implication of his story is that unemployment insurance is a form of fraud, thus playing on the resentment of the middle-class taxpayer who feels he is forced to foot the bill so that urban workers might loaf.

Stockpiling vs. Restricted Production	Ridiculing the New Deal policies of the AAA and blaming them for war-time shortages, Smith stated, "I was taught to raise all the corn we could raise; to raise all the pigs we could; to raise all the cattle we could...If we had followed the Bible; if we had followed Moses Decker; if we had followed the word of God, we could have put cotton in the barn and stored the wheat in the granary and when the war came we would have been provided for and not have to go down and suck the toe of some plutocrat in order to have a little porkchop for Sunday dinner."
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What are the things he called the American Way of Life?  
 "The home, the family altar, the glory and honor of hard work.  
 When I was a boy, if you couldn't give an account of yourself,  
 if you were offered a job and refused to take it - those are  
 the things we call the American Way of Life."

And it is these same primary group values that have meaning in a rural community. The increasing secularization of rural life has been met with resistance by the older generation, who see their old values being replaced by urban influences which they cannot understand nor tolerate. Smith cleverly made use of this cross-roads dilemma, setting his course on the road of tradition, hence his appeal was essentially to the old not to youth.

#### Appeals to a Nativist Nationalism

It is obvious that one cannot isolate these four types of appeals, except in an illustrative way, since they are all intertwined into the body of the speech. From previous excerpts one can note the emphasis which Smith placed on the glory of the American heritage, given to us by the God-fearing pioneers and sanctified in the constitution; and his attempt to identify the 'American Way of Life' with the fundamentalist Christian tradition and philosophy.

In one eloquent passage he stressed the point that "the American system of government is the only system that has ever been designed by the hand of man that has ever really tried out the highest principle of Christianity." This principle he termed "respect for individuality." Smith then contrasted Christianity and Communism.

Glory of  
American  
Heritage -  
Occupational  
Mobility  
and Ascent

"Communism only respects the mass, Christianity respects the man...That is the thing that made America. With that liberty, with that freedom, men were set free. Mill hands

became industrial magnates. Blacksmiths became publishers.

We became a land where we taught our sons that no opportunity was limited because of race, creed, religion or economic or social standing or position. That's America."

But while praising the land that guaranteed freedom of individuality and unlimited opportunity, Smith warned the audience that there were groups who were ready to sabotage this 'American Way of Life'. "A million dollars is available today - yes, maybe ten million to ridicule that system, that tradition, that rich truth, to teach the children in our schools and churches and the homes that there is a better way than the American Way!"

Enemies of  
American  
Way of Life

Who are these enemies who threaten the 'American Way of Life?' From Smith's numerous references to various groups it becomes apparent that the enemies are in the majority, if not by actual numbers, by virtue of power and propaganda. Like the true paranoid, Smith creates an illusion of a pseudo community which threatens to persecute and dominate those good Christian followers in the 'American Way of Life'. It should also be noted that the forces which threatened to overwhelm good with evil were personalized targets, not mere abstract symbols, but rather

persons or groups who could be easily labeled and identified.

Smith included the following groups as enemies: "the cynics and atheists of some of our tax-supported universities"; "Red people who have been swept up by the stooges of Joseph Stalin"; "people who don't love America enough to join her churches..., to seek honorable citizenship,...to learn her language"; "those who hated the name of Christ and would like to compromise my life and opinions"; "progressive education"; "New Deal philosophers"; "alien propagandists seeking to undermine the name of Christ in the American Way", the "pagans in this world that would like to have a great big superstate; with a Congress and Constitution above our Constitution"; "the thousand organizations that have named themselves after Christ, - Abraham Lincoln and George Washington"; "Hollywood which pours these dissipating influences into the minds of our people in a hundred or thousand directions."

Although not specifically mentioning the Jew as an enemy of America, the implication is made very clear by identifying the Jew with the atheist and the pagan; by reference to Hollywood and to those who hated the name of Christ; and by the two following excerpts from his speech.

Christian	"I don't need to tell you the thing that
Good Will	
Love Your	motivated your courage in those days of migra-
Enemy, the Jew	tion. It was the love of Christ, it was the
	Christian spirit, and as a Christian I love the Jew, I love
	the atheists, I love the pagan, I love all mankind; but do I

need to belittle Christ in order to love my neighbor? No!  
I love my neighbor because I love my Christ."

The sarcasm of this remark is not lost by his use of the word 'love'. In another passage he conveys the same impression by the negative definition of tolerance.

"Someone said, that's wrong, there's a lot of people in the country. You are liable to offend the Jews. I am going to raise the question, Is not America the most beautiful, the most comfortable and abundant place for a Jew in all the world? Of course it is. Why? Because America is a Christian nation. I was raised in a home where it was taught that it was a sin and an unpatriotic act to hate any man because of his race or his creed or his religion. I believe that the forgiveness and understanding, and the mercy and tolerance necessary to get along with people with whom we do not agree springs from the word of Christ. 'If a man strikes you on one cheek, turn the other'. That's tolerance. That's Americanism."

Tolerance, thus, was defined by Smith as forgiveness and understanding of people with whom we do not agree, and people who, in addition, have done us wrong - i.e. the Jews. And in an earlier part of the speech Smith explicitly stated that he was opposed to being broadminded, i.e. being tolerant of opinions with which we disagree. This technique of presenting incongruities and allowing for the public to make their own inferences is another example of Smith's adroit manipulation

of attitudes by indirection. It is clear which alternative the audience was intended to make, given the choice of being either red-blooded he-men or weak defenseless forgiving fellows.

Incitement  
to Action -  
Deportation  
of Aliens

What did Smith advocate as a remedy for preserving the American Way of Life? His measures were always drastic and negative, often threatening violence and expulsion from the country to the enemy. For instance, he urged that "everyone of these people that are propagating for Stalin ought to be rounded up and thrown into prison or sent back where they came from, - and you can give that a hand if you have the guts to agree with me." (great applause).

Bemoaning the fact that there were "twenty eight hundred" Stalin propagandists on the payroll of the government, Smith stated, "I don't believe anybody ought to take money out of our treasury that isn't a citizen of the United States. I think these jobs ought to belong to Americans, and to veterans first!"

In another passage he warned the audience "that unless a man is willing to live our American Way of Life, we ought to send him back and give his job to the boys that were mustered out of the army of the United States. If you believe in this like I do, give it a real big hand." (great applause)

These violent attacks were used as specific appeals to job scarcity consciousness with its attending attitude of

exclusion. The underlying inference would be 'don't sell America short -- protect your own interests first and last'. In addition, Smith makes conformism the equivalent of tolerance, thus nullifying the right of others to be different.

His solution to international problems was also essentially negative, appealing to the small businessman's credit philosophy, and to his distaste for government spending. Although denying his isolationism, Smith circumvented the argument by this type of logic.

Aid to Europe - Bankruptcy	"No Christian can be an isolationist. But no American can be an American and trade his sovereignty to the nations of the world that have never been able to demonstrate their own capacity to keep their books balanced or preserve benefits for their own system."
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Thus Smith reasoned that internationalism was equivalent to bankruptcy, since Europe's only interest was in milking the U.S. cow dry. His program of action was to "join nothing... These congressmen and senators are hard enough to handle in Washington, that if we ever let them go to Casa Blanca or some other such place they will give you away until you won't have your nightshirt left after you get through writing checks."

Such statements represent the phobia of a rich miser, very characteristic of the ambitious thrifty middle-class strainer.

Smith's general solution for preserving the 'American Way of Life' is summed up in these words: "We must keep



America Christian. We must fight subversive activities. We must not allow communism. We must regulate our national reserves for our citizens first. Those who are not citizens of this country should be sent back, now that the war is over, so that their jobs can be taken by the veterans of this war. We must stand together, we must believe together, we must fight together." Smith's comment that aliens should be sent back "now that the war is over" was an incitement to ruthless exploitation, thus an appeal to being 'smart'. The refugees having done their bit for our war effort, may now be discarded. We need them no longer.

Failure to  
Act -- Doom

The urgency of this program of action was emphasized by the dire fate that would await the nation if the status quo were not changed. "Unless we can restore that rich Christian discipline to every American home we are doomed...Unless we can restore the basic principles given to us by Zachariah Smith and Moses Decker we are a doomed nation and will be nothing but a bunch of idiots standing in line waiting for some Stalin to kick us in the face to tell us what to do."

By these remarks Smith infers or expresses a feeling of uncertainty, uneasiness and insecurity above the status quo. He foresees doom ahead for the nation unless certain qualities are restored to their rightful place. By painting the picture black Smith is able to make more explicit the necessity of following his program of action. The kind of doom he expects

may be partly inferred from the job scarcity theme and his call to veterans to seek government jobs rather than business careers.

Devices for Gaining Audience Approval  
and Sympathy

Political  
Joke

In addition to these appeals used by Smith there were other devices which he employed for playing on audience sympathies and gaining their approval. The first of these is the use of the political joke, which not only effectively illustrates an argument but relieves tension. The butt of one such joke was Henry Wallace and the AAA program and involved a story about the father of the quintuplets.

The story was this: "They offered this man \$100,000 to bring his kids down to the World's Fair. They got him over as far as Windsor, Canada. And he picked up an American paper - he could read a little - and he balked and wouldn't cross. He said, 'If I cross that river with those five babies this summer, they are going to plow two of them under!'"

Family  
References

Another device apparent throughout the whole speech was Smith's frequent references to members of his family, - his wife, mother, father and son. This could serve two purposes; first, to establish himself in the audience's mind as a genuine respectable family man; and thus somehow above reproach -- an appeal to primary group

sentiments; and secondly, to use family references as props for building his own ego and character. In addition, Smith was not above passing on 'folksy' suggestions for happy relations between husband and wife, assuming the role of Mr. Anthony.

For instance, he interjected at an early point in his speech this advice to young fellows: "And as a fellow that has gotten along with his wife for twenty-four years, I want to give you young fellows some advice. No woman ever gets tired of being told how much you love her. You can tell her when you come downstairs in the morning before breakfast; you can tell her after breakfast, before lunch and after lunch, and she will just sit there and lap it up like warm milk. We need a lot more of that in this world."

Loyalty of	Smith adroitly used references to his wife
Wife --	
Inspiration	as a means of indirectly paying tribute to him-
for Leader	self and of establishing his own integrity.

"No matter what anybody else says, my wife believes in her husband. We have been married twenty-four years, and in spite of the Capital Times, she thinks I am the best fellow in the world...And as a man who has lived in the public eye for some years and been the subject of great controversy and criticism, I want to pay tribute to the loyalty of my wife. There has never been a moment she didn't believe in my sincerity and integrity and that she wasn't willing to sit with me on the

platform and support in spirit and mind and body the things that are so dear to me, and the feelings that warm the cochles of my heart."

Mother Love - Gerald L.K. Smith's remarks concerning his  
Source of  
Courage eighty-year-old mother were also calculated to win approval for himself as the loving and obedient son who had been grossly maligned and misunderstood by the public. He related this 'tear jerking' story. "I bid my mother goodbye the other day. I said, 'Mother, I'd rather have you with me up at Cross Roads than a million.' She said, 'I wouldn't leave your father for a million because he might go while I was gone and I'd never forgive myself.'...As I kissed her she pulled me close and said, 'Son, no matter how hard it is, go straight.' 'Mother,' I said, 'That's the thing that gets me into all this trouble!'"

In these passages Smith represents himself as the wife-inspired, mother-blessed and unrecognized moral hero, thereby proving himself to be the moral man in immoral society. Despite the trials and temptations of life, he had retained as substantial super-ego symbols his mother and wife, and he would not betray them.

Heroism of To prove himself a good patriotic American,  
Son -- Borrowed  
Glory for hence denying rumors of his subversive activi-  
Father ties during the war, Smith cited the story of his son. According to the father, the son was wounded four

times in the war while serving with Morrow's Rangers. "He fought 90 days behind enemy lines. He walked 825 miles in one pair of shoes; he, with his battalion, fought and chopped their way thru the jungles and only 152 men came back out of 800. He was torn with wounds and starvation. I ask you, in the name of God, don't you think he earned the right of his father to say Hello to his old neighbors back where he graduated from high school? Wasn't that why we were told we won this war?"

By playing on the theme of heroism and sacrifice, thus basking in the reflected glory of his son, Gerald Smith, as father, could hope to be accepted into the community as a worthy patriotic Native Son. His attitude was 'After all, I gave my son --. The least you people can do is accept me as a patriotic father who sacrificed for the war effort.'

Catholic  
Conversion  
of Son -  
Proof of  
Smith's  
Tolerance

Aware of the Catholic opposition to his appearance at the Centennial, Smith cited his son's marriage to a Catholic girl and the fact that the son had turned Catholic. "That ought to blow up some of these liars that have tried to undercut my old friendships. He married one of the sweetest girls in the world, - I believe she is as good or better than he! She has borne him a beautiful child. But oh, how ridiculous it makes those outside trouble-makers who would cut old friends apart!"

Martyrdom  
for Sake of  
Preserving  
Primary  
Group  
Values

Although implicit in these quotations is an emphasis on the public's misconception of the 'true worth' of Gerald L.K. Smith, there are passages in the speech which state more explicitly Smith's attitude of martyrdom and sacrifice. The device is effective for gaining sympathy and for winning followers who will believe in his sincerity and integrity. For example, he informed the audience:

"I have gotten into a lot of trouble since I saw you last. Do you know why? Trying to tell about this communism and those problems, - just what my school teachers told me to tell when I went to school in Cross Roads." Implicit in such a statement is the idea that Smith himself is not a trouble maker, but that he is being persecuted for ideals that the audience holds as true and valid. He is fighting their battle attempting to preserve their threatened values.

In another passage he said, "I am really hated and scorned by those who hated the name of Christ and would like to compromise my life and opinions, but the Bible didn't leave me. 'Blessed are ye when men shall persecute you and libel you and say all manner of evil against you...Be glad for great is thy reward in Heaven, for so persecuted were they the prophets before you."

Ties of Identification with Cross Roads blood and soil                      In addition to these other devices, Smith used tales of his own boyhood days in the Kickapoo Valley and Cross Roads to demonstrate his essential identity with the audience - that he was one of them, by ties of friendship, belief, tradition and blood. He pleaded for the audience to recognize that he was made of the same stuff as they, that he was not an alien but a friend, an old neighbor, a blood relative, someone of whom they could approve, not scorn.

"I don't stand for a single thing I wasn't taught at my mother's knee. I believe the same things you stand for. Some of you don't know that because I have been interpreted for you by such outstanding journalistic geniouses as the Capital Times. I want to thank them for the good will they developed among my old neighbors before I got back."

Stressing the fact that he was the same Gerald Smith whom they knew as a boy, unchanged by urban life, politics, and publicity, Smith stated, "I want to say to you, old friends of mine, I have not changed a bit. I stand for the same things you do, and your mothers and fathers stood for, and that you were taught as a boy and a girl in your home."

In this passage Smith demonstrates that he has remained faithful and constant to the primary group values which he was taught at his mother's knee and in the little red school house. His constancy, in the face of an outgroup that opposes the good homely virtues, was proof of his moral character. He remained uncorrupted by city life.

To seal his identity with the community, to prove that there was "nothing unique" about himself, Smith made references to his "thousand cousins up and down the Kickapoo...that look just like I do. I had a telephone call from a newspaper in Milwaukee this afternoon. They said, 'Do you expect any trouble up there?' I said, 'No, I am in my own element. I have a thousand cousins that will be at that meeting. They know how to speak the American language.' There's the Henthornes and the Chitwoods that are related to me. My mother is a Henthorne, her mother a Chitwood."

Smith correctly conceived of the audience as a conglomeration of big families and appealed to the extended family theme, effective in any stable rural society which takes pride in pedigree, cousinhood and fertility.

#### Speech in Reference to Middle-Class Resentment

From this content analysis of the speech of Gerald L.K. Smith, it is clear that Smith was appealing to the middle-class with its diffuse fears and resentments. His special technique was not the manipulation of facts but the adroit handling of symbols which could be interpreted by the audience in terms of its own value frame of reference. The particular character of this middle-class resentment may be best understood by a brief delineation of the factors which underly it.

First, there is the traditional faith of the American middle-class in the liberal gospel of equal opportunity, free



competition, hard work, pecuniary reward and individual ascent. This ideology and faith corresponds to the laissez-faire stage of capitalism which was based on numerous small scale units and operations. It was a stage in the history of our country which justified a faith in expanding opportunities, the Horatio Alger myth. Yet today, with a changing economic structure monopolies surround numerous petty units of business, threatening their very survival. The inevitable result of this discrepancy in size between the large corporation and the small shop keeper has been a radical alteration of the 'free' competitive situation. No longer is there competition among equals, but rather among unequals. The race is one of handicaps. What to the little fellow is a risk involving his last shirt is to the big corporation only a little game. Hence, from a rational point of view, a faith in competition among unequals makes no sense and is a fraudulent imposition for maintaining the status quo.

However, ideas have a strange persistence and inspite of altered conditions people will cling to them for lack of better support. So it is with the bulk of the middle-class who still retain a faith in the old liberal ideology but get angry because they are prevented from realizing those liberal values. Out of this dimly experienced situation the middle-class deflects its resentment against many targets: urbanism, politics, and bigness, all of which is subtly identified with fraud, hypocrisy, plutocracy and Hollywood. In this situation

the Jew easily becomes the image of fraud and cunning and power, the symbolic cause of their frustration.

Smith in his speech cleverly mobilized this moral indignation of the middle-class against fraud (the moral treacheries of the something-for-nothing school), cynicism (a product of the urban secular intelligentsia), irreligion (atheists), urbanism and the un-American immigrants (an appeal to job-scarcities and xenophobic small town folks). Primary group values fitting into a context of nativism were also mobilized against the failure of monopoly capitalism which, however, he never identified. Instead, the aggression was diffused and deflected against a wide variety of images reflective of secondary contacts: the press, New Deal, University intelligentsia, communists, Hollywood, atheists and Jews.

The nativist appeal was not incidental. On the contrary it fits neatly into the rubric of a fascist mentality. For although nativism has old roots and traditions in America, its meaning is defined not by symbols but also by the particular stage in the politico-social development. Today nativism - with its appeals to blood and soil, insular nationalism, 'old-fashioned' values - feeds into fascism and gains a new significance for the threatened middle-class.

## IV

## ATTITUDE SURVEY

A year following the centennial celebration, a public opinion study was conducted in Cross Roads among 58 young men, ages 20 to 30.<sup>1</sup> The primary purpose of the survey was to obtain information regarding the life goals of young men in a rural community, and the subsidiary problem concerned their attitudes toward Gerald L.K. Smith. Since there had been embarrassment and controversy in the community because of the speech of Gerald L.K. Smith, it was thought advisable to avoid biasing the results by probing the respondent's attitude toward Smith in a non-directive conversational manner, with no recording of comments during the conversation. The remarks on Smith were secured after terminating the more formal interview. The questions asked included the following: What was the story on the Centennial? Did you hear him speak? What did he say? What does he stand for? Who is he hooked up with? and What did you think of him?

The responses were evaluated as to whether a person approved of Gerald Smith, was neutral or indifferent, or whether he disapproved of him. Twenty-six men showed some or strong approval of Smith; 20 were neutral; and 12 indicated some or strong disapproval of him. These responses in turn were broken down, according to the explicit or implicit

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1. For sampling method see appendix.

reasons given for their attitude toward Smith.

Approval of Smith

Table I. The Reasons for Approval of Smith  
cited by Twenty-Six Men

	<u>Number</u>
Excellent orator and good speech . . . . .	19
Didn't say anything bad . . . . .	10
Against Jews and/or Communists . . . . .	9
Against crooked politicians in government and vs. newspapers . . . . .	3
Talked about old times - wants to put things the way they were 100 years ago . . . . .	2
Friends and folks liked him and speech . . .	2
A smart politician and good guy to know for favors . . . . .	1

It is interesting to note that only 14 of the 26 men cited specific parts of Smith's program (against Jews, communists, crooked politicians and newspapers and interest in restoring old ways) as reasons for their approval of the man and 12 of this group focussed on the negative rather than positive planks of Smith's platform. Of those who approved of Smith, 19 were favorably impressed with his ability as an orator, and generally regarded him as a 'darn good fellow.' In addition, ten respondents liked him because 'he didn't say anything bad,' i.e., didn't talk

against Catholics or Jews, thus emphasizing the reaction of anticipant anxiety the men had had toward Smith's speech and their defensive attitude of him.

Typical of some of the remarks of those who approved of Smith's opposition to Jews are the following:

1. (Mink farmer, age 25, married, 1 child, veteran, high school grad, strong prejudice against Jews, no success conflict - norms interiorized)<sup>2</sup>

"You see he's against Jews and Catholics. He said he gets kicked out of the big cities by the Jews. What he does is get up in a hotel and starts talking against the Jews and they don't like that. He said they said he was against Catholics too, but he wasn't because he married one."

(Interviewer: What did he say?)

"Just like I said. The Jews don't like him. For example, Schwartz<sup>3</sup> in town doesn't like him. He's a Jew. That was really something in this town. More cops and newspaper men. I thought he gave a very good speech and he's an excellent orator."

2. (Student at University, age 23, married, no children, veteran, strong prejudice vs. Jews and with strong success conflict)

"He's just a big lawyer or he's telling the truth. The way he talked I thought he was a good man. The rest don't seem to think so - other cities I mean. But people in Cross Roads thought he was alright. He wanted to kick the Jews out and the niggers and get rid of communism too. He at least talked so you could understand him."

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2. For criteria for evaluating success conflict and prejudice see appendix.
  3. All names included in study are fictitious.

3. (House painter, age 23, single, veteran, some high school, strong prejudice against Jews and senses little difficulty in achieving success goals)

"I thought he was a good speaker. He talked good and loud and you could understand him."

(Interviewer: What did he say?)

"He talked against the government and the Jews. He said there was no country in the world where a Jew could own a business the way he does in this country and not be bothered. He was actually talking against the Jews like people said he would before he came, and I got that he didn't like them too well. He said some people said he didn't like Catholics, but his son married a Catholic, so you see he wasn't so bad as they said. I really thought he gave a good speech."

4. (Clerk in drug store, age 20, single, veteran, high school grad, strong prejudice against Jews, and strong success conflict)

"Well you know Schwartz up here, he's a Jew and then there are a few Norwegians like Judson across the street and there's another Jew next to them. Well the Jews were against having him because he was against Jews and Catholics. The Catholic part didn't matter so much really, he wasn't against them."

(Interviewer: What did he say?)

"He was against communism mostly and he only talked about that and made the people feel good."

(Interviewer: Do you agree with him?)

"I'm against communism but I don't know what he really stands for. I wish he would have said all that he stood for like he does other places. That would have been better. The country needs more of that."

(Interviewer: More of what?)

"Well, you know, getting things straightened out." (Wouldn't respond to further probes).

These four men were frank in their approval of Smith's 'race-baiting' program and understood the sarcasm of his remarks about Jews. In short, unlike many of the others, they were not 'taken-in' by Smith's speech. Rather they liked him because he was against Jews. In addition, Smith convinced them that he was not anti-Catholic since his son had married into that faith. "So you see he wasn't so bad as they said," implying that it was wrong to be against Catholics but commendable for him to be anti-semitic.

5. (Parts man in garage, age 29, married, one child, veteran, high school grad, tolerant toward Jews, with strong success conflict)

"He was supposed to be against Catholics and Jews, but I couldn't see that he was. Of course that would be the wrong thing according to the American way of life...I don't care what the man stands for, you ought to give him a chance to speak. If he's a lemon or a crooked man, the people will find him out. I'm an average guy and I think other people are average and they know when a guy is trying to put something over. Now Mrs. Schwartz (wife of Jewish merchant) was against him and she really didn't know if he was against Jews. So she came to the VFW and asked us not to march in the parade because he was speaker. I was against that and I was against her husband staying open that day too. That's not fair. Let the people decide what kind of a man he was. That's the way this country makes progress. I thought he was a good man. He didn't say anything out of line at all. I agree with all the things he said. There was no harm in it at all."

6. (Skilled crane operator, age 28, single, high school grad, anti-prejudice, with some success conflict)



"He was supposed to be against the Catholics too and that's why Dr. Jones talked so much against it. But he said his wife and son were both Catholics so he wasn't really against them. I don't go for that either. Mrs. Schwartz was against him too and she went around and got people to sign something against it. If she had come to me I'd say that's none of her business. I'd say - 'Let the man talk before you pass judgment on him.' When I got through hearing him talk, I could see nothing wrong about it. Mrs. Schwartz is Jewish, I guess, and Smith was supposed to be against them, but I don't think he was. I didn't hear him say anything like that and I listened closely."

7. (Clerk in store for summer, student at college, age 22, single, veteran, some prejudice against Jews, with some success conflict)

"The papers all over the country were against him, but I couldn't see why. They said he was a race-monger and anti-communist. But I heard him and he didn't do any of that. In fact, the FBI investigation cleared him and even offered him protection. The Jews and Catholics in town were against him - so some of the folks wrote to Henry Ford and he wrote a letter back that surprised everybody and said that Smith was a good man and even that he backed him. I think people made a big fuss about it because he really was a nice fellow and made a very nice speech."

8. (Unemployed and unskilled, age 22, single, veteran, high school grad, strong prejudice against Jews, and with strong success conflict)

"He was in town here last year and I think he won a lot of converts in town. They all went up and shook hands with him when he was done."

(Interviewer: What did he talk about?)

"Well first of all he told the people they were good and made them feel important. And then he said that we shouldn't send food to Europe when we needed it here. He preached against communism and then he went on to say how Catholics were against him, but he told



them that his son married a Catholic. He said that others said he was against the war and he said that his son had three wounds in the Burma campaign."

(Interviewer: Why didn't people want him to come to town?)

"They said he was a fascist, but I couldn't see that."

(Interviewer: What did you think of him?)

"Well, all I know is what he said here. I don't know what he stands for in the country, but unless he didn't say what he believes I thought he was a darn good guy and there was nothing wrong with him. Maybe he was just trying to make an impression in town."

9. (Clerk in hardware store, age 22, single, veteran, high school grad, prejudiced against Jews, with strong success conflict)

"Some said L.K. was bad. I don't know why. He gave a good speech and those who heard it said he spoke the truth. My folks heard it, I didn't, and that's what they said...He's backed by Henry Ford and the Chicago Tribune. All the papers were against him, except the Chicago Tribune. They were the only ones who were fair about it. Schwartz was against him, he's a Jew, and some people stuck up for him."

The preceding excerpts illustrate rather clearly the naive reliance of these young men on certain types of evidence for supporting their approval of Gerald Smith and their distrust of other sources of information, especially newspapers. The personal testimony of Smith, Henry Ford or friends in community sufficed to disclaim Smith as a 'race-hater,' regardless of fact that in other speeches Smith had clearly indicated his opposition to certain racial and

religious minorities, and that most newspapers, churches, and labor unions had strongly opposed Smith and his 'race-mongering' program. Confronted by conflicting views and opinions about the man, these respondents singled out the specific evidence that was most convincing and conclusive for them.

Another important point to note is the eagerness indicated by two respondents, to 'judge for oneself'. In part, this attitude was dictated by a faith in their own and other average people's ability to correctly determine what kind of man Smith was after hearing him speak. "If he's a lemon or a crooked man, the people will find him out." However, they formed their own opinion by accepting Smith's speech in Cross Roads at face value, failing to search for deeper implications or motives. The counterpart of their desire to 'judge for oneself' was a distrust of manipulation by 'outsiders' and by propaganda. For them the logical and democratic solution for determining the beliefs of a controversial figure was to emphasize fair play, which would "give the man a chance to speak" before people passed unfair judgment on him.

Of course one cannot overlook the possibility that the evidence for approval of Smith is accepted because it supports beliefs which the men want to hold. And their interviews suggest that, by discounting adverse newspaper publicity about Smith as less reliable than the testimony of men like Henry Ford, friends or folks, the men could find an easy rationale for bolstering their approval of Smith.

However there may be good reason for this skepticism of newspaper information. As was indicated in a previous section, neither of the papers with large distribution in Cross Roads (LaCrosse Tribune or Capital Times) printed any factual story about the career and attitude of Gerald L.K. Smith. On the contrary, they resorted to labels, smears and news stories slanted on angle of public opposition to the man. The reader was never given an opportunity to sort out all the relevant information on Smith and to then arrive at a reasoned objective conclusion. Rather, he had the choice of selecting the bias of the newspapers as evidence or the opposite bias of people for whom he had respect. This problem was further complicated by these respondents' generally low level of political information. Therefore they also lacked an adequate orientation with which to evaluate, first, the comments of Smith and his supporters, and secondly, the labels used by the newspapers. For example, the above group of five respondents, when asked 'what do you think fascism means?', replied:

5. "I really don't know. I didn't pay much attention to that."
6. "I don't know. I never found out."
7. "Boy! I don't know. I don't think I know the difference between fascism and communism. It's a form of government where government is the head of big business."
8. "Dictatorship, I'd say."
9. "Well, it means there would be one class of people dominating the rest for themselves rather than benefit the masses. I don't understand it at all."

A similar confused attitude was held in reference to the meaning of communism, with a general tendency to equate the two isms.

Neutral Attitude Toward Smith

Table II. The Reasons for Neutral Attitude  
Toward Smith Cited by Twenty Men

	Number
<u>Disinterested</u>	
Don't know enough about the man.	
Didn't hear him - heard rumors	
only . . . . .	10
Didn't say much - Just talked about	
wife and friends. Nothing	
controversial . . . . .	4
	14
<u>Interested or Confused</u>	
Couldn't understand what the trouble	
was about . . . . .	3
Didn't talk about things he stood for -	
couldn't form an opinion - he fooled	
you . . . . .	3
	6

The table gives some indication of the general reasons for a neutral attitude. Of this group, 14 were classified as disinterested and they included the men who had little information about Smith, who had not heard his speech and those who were unimpressed with the speech because it was non-controversial. The remaining six respondents were termed 'interested but confused.' That is, they took a neutral position either because they couldn't understand what the

community controversy was about or because they couldn't form an opinion on Smith since 'he didn't talk about things he stood for.' (There was no indication that the neutral attitude was merely a defense against expressing an opinion to a stranger.)

Among the group classified as 'disinterested' the most interesting cases for analysis concerned those who registered disappointment because the Smith speech was considered non-controversial. For example, one of the fellows indicated disinterest because the speech did not precipitate an exciting riot, thus emphasizing another type of anticipant reaction to the affair.

10. (Semi-skilled laborer at tobacco warehouse, age 25, single, veteran, high school grad, some prejudice against Jews, and with some success conflict.)

"He really didn't say much. There was supposed to be a riot and I went over just to watch the fun. But you could have heard a pin drop all the while he talked and nothing happened. He didn't even say anything that would hurt the respect of those who talked against him in Cross Roads."

A similar viewpoint was expressed by another respondent.

11. (Recreation director, student, age 21, single, tolerant toward Jews and with some success conflict)

"He didn't say anything out of the ordinary. He just talked about Cross Roads history and how wonderful Vernon County was. All he did was make the people feel good. If you ask me, somebody just started the whole thing so they'd get a crowd. I really believe that because I never saw so many people in Cross Roads before."

One disinterested fellow, typical of those who didn't hear Smith's speech, took the attitude that the whole controversy was a big joke, and he was not interested or curious enough to learn further details.

12. (Part-time bartender, age 25, single, veteran, 8th grade education, strong prejudice against Jews, no success conflict - norms not interiorized)

"Jesus, that was a stink! Ha. Ha. That had this town upside down. To tell you the truth I couldn't understand what it was all about."

For those six respondents who were interested but confused by the Smith issue, the following remark is typical:

13. (Store clerk and mail carrier, age 25, married with one child, some college, veteran, some prejudice against Jews, strong success conflict)

"He didn't say too much, except about the history of Cross Roads. I really don't know much about the man. I wish he would have talked about the things he stood for here, then I could form an opinion on him. I noticed that he got kicked out of another place yesterday so I'm not too sure what kind of a man he was. He really didn't let a person know what he stands for in his speech."

This man's attitude indicated a healthy skepticism regarding Smith's speech and a willingness to reserve judgment until more facts were available. He was aware that Smith had not clearly disclosed his views in the Centennial speech, an impression gained from the newspaper accounts of Smith's other talks.

## Disapproval of Smith

Table III. Reasons for Disapproval of Smith  
Cited by Twelve Men

	Number
Wants race supremacy - against Catholics, Jews, Negroes . . . . .	6
Hoodwinks the public, too shrewd, wouldn't trust him or methods . . . . .	6
Rabble-rouser . . . . .	4
Friends or folks don't like him . . . . .	2
Don't like what he stands for - America Firster . . . . .	1

Only 12 out of 58 respondents had some or strong disapproval of Smith. Half of this group cited the fact that Smith was a race monger - against Catholics and/or Jews and Negroes - as their principal reason for disapproval. Six men opposed Smith because they were suspicious of his motives and methods, i.e., 'wouldn't trust him'; and two men disapproved of Smith primarily on basis that their friends or folks disliked him. Only one person disliked him because of Smith's affiliations with the America First party. For example:

14. (Bookkeeper, student, age 26, single, veteran, tolerant toward Jews, some success conflict)

"He's just an old rabble rouser. He ran the America First Committee - that's like one of these over 6 foot tall clubs - just a racket and he makes money on it. He got kicked out of Chicago before he came here...It wasn't very good and I don't think many people went."

This unusual interpretation of the America First party is an example of an attitude which, lacking a political frame of reference, labels a political group as a racket and oddity.

Three people primarily disapproved of Smith because he was too shrewd and untrustworthy. Typical of this attitude is the following:

15. (Manager of dairy, age 30, married, 1 child, some college, tolerant toward Jews, no conflict about achieving success goals)

"Well, you see Smith is a sonnovabitch from way back. He's the rabble-rousing type. I heard him speak and he was supposed to be against the Catholics and the Jews and the unions but he wasn't against any of them. He had his son with him and he was married to a Catholic. He was very shrewd around here, he didn't come out with his usual stuff. He only said a few mild things against Russia...You really can't tell on a man like that what he stands for. They really shouldn't have had him here."

One of the respondents opposed Smith for the reason that his father disliked him and also because he objected to Smith's exploitation of the veteran angle. Although a unique case, for this fellow Smith's appeal to patriotism backfired.

16. (Truck driver, age 20, single, veteran, 10th grade education, tolerant toward Jews, no success conflict - norms not interiorized)

(Interviewer: What does he stand for?)

"It beats me. I know he's no good though, that's what my father says. Well, for example, he said his son lost his leg in the war. He shouldn't have said that because



there were lots of guys in the audience that were wounded and crippled too - imagine how they felt. No, I didn't like him."

However, most of those who disapproved of Smith recited the facts regarding his race-mongering and rabble-rousing tactics. The following excerpts illustrate clearly this type of reaction.

17. (Civil service employee, age 30, married, two children, veteran, high school grad, tolerant toward Jews, and some success conflict)

"The trouble was he gave a very nice speech and he took all these people in. He said that he wasn't against Catholics or Jews or Negroes, but that's not really what he stands for. In other places he talks against them and is very prejudiced. He changes his color wherever he speaks to suit the area. When he was a Huey Long man he was a lot different than he was here - he was just the opposite."

(Interviewer: How do you feel about him?)

"I'm against his policies and everything he stands for, but he's not a dangerous man because people will always catch up with a guy who changes color the way he does in the end."

This man's optimistic faith in the people's ability to "catch up with a guy who changes color" is another indication of the primary group attitude, already expressed by two respondents who approved of Smith. Such an attitude appears naive to an urbanite, but makes good horse sense to a small town fellow who, through daily intimate contacts with people,

has successfully managed to discern friends from enemies. The fallacy of the assumption is that primary group logic can validly apply to complex secondary group situations. In that very process, the 'trusting' one may be hopelessly duped by the clever wiles and propaganda of a politician. Faith without knowledge is not a sufficient guarantee that democratic procedures will be observed and that the public can be immunized from dangerous demagogues.

The four following interviews are excellent examples of men who showed remarkable insight into Smith's type of appeals and demagogic strategy. Not only were they strongly opposed to his racist philosophy but they also had a clear conception of Smith's technique for winning friends and influencing people.

18. (Owns welding shop, age 30, married, no children, high school grad, veteran, anti-prejudiced, no conflict about achieving success goals)

"You see this L.K. Smith is a real rabble rouser. He preached against Jews, Catholics and Negroes. From what I gathered, and I didn't go to hear him, he wanted to ship two-thirds of the population out of the country or else kill them and make the other third president. I guess there's nothing you can call him but a plain old rabble rouser!! I wouldn't have anything to do with a man like that."

19. (Electrician's helper, age 21, single, veteran, high school grad., tolerant toward Jews, no conflict about achieving success goals)

"Myself I thought he was a rotten egg. You see, he's a wonderful speaker and the people around here go for him. First of all, he talks about things the people believe and are truthful and then he rings in other stuff when you don't know it. That's how he influences people. For example, he says, 'I love the atheist, I love the Jew and I love the pagan' and it's very subtle because everyone understands the sarcasm and not only that, they like it. His tactics are like Huey Long and he was Long's lieutenant. Of course, Long built bridges and things like that, but then so did Hitler. Methods like that are not what I would call democratic. That man is a rabble-rouser and a dangerous individual. He leads the ignorant."

20. (Body shop repair man, age 29, married, no children, 8th grade education, veteran, anti-prejudiced, no success conflict - norms not interiorized)

"Why that no good goddam sonnovabitch! He stood for everything that we fought against in the war. Everything every soldier was fighting for he was against. He was a sonnovabitch bastard. First, he's saying something very innocent like and the next thing you know he's talking race prejudice and religious hatred. Most of these people didn't see it either. Them stupid bastards. Sure, he's clever and shrewd and makes the people like him - like they was eating out of his hand and didn't know what it means."

(Interviewer: What does he mean?)

"I dunno, that sonnovabitch. I think he's a communist - he wants dictatorship and one class rule all and race supremacy. Yes, I guess he's a communist."

(Interviewer: What's he hooked up with?)

"He's a Ku Klux Klaner and he gets most of his support in the South - what he has of it. Let me tell you he's no good and don't believe anybody who says he is."

21. (Druggist in summer, student at university, married, one child, tolerant toward Jews, no success conflict - norms not interiorized)

"But he really is a silver-tongued orator. In a way he's something like Roosevelt. In 20 minutes he could convince you of anything, but when you go away and think about it you can see his logic is wrong and what he really means."

(Interviewer: What does he mean?)

"Well, he's for racial supremacy and all that. I don't care for him or that kind of stuff one bit. I tell you he's a trouble maker and no good. I'd have nothing to do with this sort."

#### Effect of Newspaper Publicity and of Speech in Forming Attitudes

In analyzing the reactions of the various men in the sample toward Gerald L.K. Smith, it is important to assess the effect of newspaper publicity and of the speech itself in crystallizing attitudes. Since there was no 'before and after' test such an assessment must be done by inference, admittedly a poor substitute.

1. Approximately 45% of the young men interviewed approved of Smith and his program as outlined in the speech.<sup>4</sup>

Nine of these 26 men approved of Smith because he indicated that he was against Jews and communists, thus bolstering

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4. Since we have no comparable figures for the rest of the community, nor for other types of audiences, it is difficult to determine whether that figure is high or low. In any case, we may assume that the sample is representative of men in the age group 20 to 30 who live in a small rural community in the Midwest.

their own prejudicial point of view. This fact demonstrates that Smith was effective in his Cross Roads speech in conveying to members of his audience his position on Jews and communists, even though he was less explicit on these issues (especially on topic of Jews) than in other addresses. In short, for these nine men, his appeal was effective. As for the newspaper publicity which played up Smith as a rabble-rouser and race-baiter, we can infer two things. First, that for this group of prejudiced men, the publicity was not deprivational of Smith but rather indulgent of him, i.e. it made Smith a hero who shared their own prejudiced viewpoint. Secondly, these men reacted unfavorably, not to Smith, but to the newspapers that 'smeared' him.

For these few who approved of Smith because he lambasted 'crooked politicians' in the government and newspapers, like the Capital Times, analysis of the interviews reveals that their attitude was conditioned more by a vague resentment than by a definite political anti-New Deal philosophy. That is, they enjoyed hearing Smith run down 'big shots' since they themselves entertained resentful attitudes toward any person or group in power and authority. Thus, Smith enabled this group to experience emotional catharsis in his denouncement of various power groups. This attitude is indicated in the following excerpts:

22. (Manager stock yard and raises tobacco crop, age 27, single, some business college training, prejudiced against Jews, with some success conflict)

"Well, he didn't hold any punches against the government. He really tore into the politicians and exposed them. He's a wonderful speaker. He's one of the best speakers in the country. Some say he's a rabble rouser. But show me a politician who isn't. That's just what a politician is supposed to be. He gets kicked out of every place he goes, but it's the labor unions who do that. They're against him most."

Such a person enjoys a good fight and is not disturbed over fact of whether the speaker or his views are 'respectable.' On the contrary, his cynical attitude implies that all politics is rabble-rousing; hence 'give me the biggest rabble-rouser'. For this man, the label 'rabble-rouser' had positive rather than negative connotations. A somewhat similar point of view was expressed by another respondent.

23. (Carpenter, age 20, single, veteran, high school grad, prejudiced against Jews, with strong success conflict)

"He's just a big politician and knows a lot of Congressmen in Washington. That's why people around here didn't like him. He knows too much and he could tell a lot on the big boys like (names local men) that they don't want known. They're afraid of him and opposed to him, but good."

(Interviewer: How do you feel about him?)

"Well, I just think he's a damn smart politician and he's a good guy to know. He's trying to get a disability pension for my brother right now who hurt his back in the army."

This person also unswayed by newspaper publicity, appreciated the fact that Smith was allegedly opposed by men whom the respondent disliked. Smith represented not only someone who might do him personal favors but also someone with whom he could identify in his rebellious attitude toward the local big wigs.

Furthermore, the fact that this fellow considered Smith to be a 'damned smart politician' who could fight for his own personal interests was sufficient reason for approval of the man, irrespective of all ethical considerations. Implicit in such a formulation of expediency is the attitude that 'even if he is a racketeer, if he helps me, he's a good guy to know'.

It is especially interesting to note that only two men were primarily influenced by Smith's appeals to tradition and the rural frame of reference. One of them was studying to be an evangelical minister, and the other fellow was a bachelor and a good Norwegian Lutheran with strong home ties. The man studying to be a minister commented:

(Waiter during summer, age 21, single, strong prejudice, no success conflict -- norms only partially interiorized)

"I agree with his doctrine. He's all for putting things the way they used to be 100 years ago, and I think that's right. He wants to put the control of the family in the elders' hands again. The country needs people who will unify it and prevent too much of this communism, and that's what Smith stands for."

Perhaps it is not surprising that Smith's appeals to tradition and rural frame of reference would have so little



effect on a young group. The past he was attempting to invoke was one that placed high virtues on pietistic Christian values - i.e., respect and love for the Bible, 'Honor thy father and thy mother,' diligence and thrift, an ascetic enjoyment of work for work's sake with taboos on the sinful pleasures of this world. These special values might be meaningful to an older generation, raised in that Lutheran or Calvinist tradition, who could take delight in imposing a strict ethical code on youth who had not suffered as they had suffered. The 'elders' might well place a positive valuation on suffering and privation, besides retaining strong sentimental ties with their home and religion. However, such appeals would have little effect on most youth, rural or urban, who today are reacting against the rigorous moral codes of the older generation, and are more receptive to ideas of change and rebellion.

It is true, of course, that youth displays considerable nostalgia for the days of frontier adventure and romanticism but such sentiments are nurtured precisely because they bespeak of excitement, defiance of authority and free and easy mores, rather than of restraint, asceticism and conformism to moral and legal codes. Smith's speech was not an appeal to the adventurous spirit and restlessness of youth. On the contrary, his appeals to tradition and the rural frame of reference were directed at the older generation who have strong emotional moorings in the religious past and a lost identity with the amoral future.



Similar conclusions may be made regarding Smith's constant reference to members of his family, sentimental appeals which appeared to be largely ineffective with the group interviewed. However, for an older group impressed by demonstrations of great affection and devotion to one's family these references very likely would have a different effect. Their primary group values of love for mother and devotion for wife and child would be ample proof for accepting Smith as a good moral man.

Smith's greatest asset in winning the approval of the majority of these young men was his ability as a 'silver-tongued orator,' a 'spell-binder,'. Nineteen out of the 26 men who approved of Smith were highly impressed with his 'wonderful speech' and his dynamic platform personality. Undoubtedly Smith's skillful use of various techniques to gain audience sympathy and understanding were sufficiently effective to dispel among this group any doubts or misapprehensions which had been fostered by unfavorable newspaper publicity. This is born out by the many references in the interviews to the fact that 'he didn't say anything bad,' 'he's supposed to be against Catholics and Jews, but he said he wasn't,' etc. Some of these men, anticipating trouble at the Centennial celebration, and expecting that Smith would corroborate the adverse newspaper publicity, were dumbfounded by the so-called innocent speech. As the reporter from the Capital Times stated, "I had the impression that our publicity back-fired." This group was naive enough to believe that 'a man could be

taken at his word.' The subtleties of propaganda by-passed their observations. However, this naivete and faith may be best understood in the context of a small community, where leaders are presumed to be honest men rather than crooks, and where there exists no necessity for suspiciousness, which is a must for the metropolitan man dealing in an impersonal environment. On the other hand, one cannot generalize too far on the basis of these few cases, since others in the sample revealed a cynicism toward and suspicion of political leaders, an evidence of the inroads of the urban mentality.

The influence of Smith's speech in determining favorable attitudes is partially indicated by a comparison of those men who heard the speech with those who did not.<sup>5</sup>

Table IV

Heard speech?	Attitude toward Smith	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	Total
Yes		20	6	6	32
No		6	14	6	26
		26	20	12	58

The chi-square computed for this table is 10.55 which, with two degrees of freedom, is significant at the 1% level. From this table, two important observations can be made.

5. See appendix for table showing relation between the following three factors: attitude toward Smith; attitude toward Jews; and whether or not they heard the speech.

First, of those 26 who were favorable to Smith, 20 heard the speech, and of those 32 who heard the speech 20 were impressed favorably with Smith. Secondly, of those who were neutral to Smith, the majority had not heard Smith's speech, and of those who failed to hear the speech, the majority were neutral.

This relationship indicates that the speech was effective in creating approval for Smith and in reducing the number of those who were previously neutral. However, there may be another selective factor operating. That is, those who attended the meeting, attended because of a positive predisposition to Smith's ideas on Jewry, and those who took a neutral stand were not interested sufficiently in the subject to bother to attend the meeting. For those who were unfavorable to Smith the fact of hearing the speech made no significant difference. And from this we might conclude that those who had clearly formulated antagonistic attitudes toward Smith and his program of anti-semitism could not be easily influenced by Smith's oratorical tricks and subtleties.

One way of checking on the validity of the selective factor of predisposition for or against Smith is to examine the relation of the respondent's attitude toward Jews<sup>6</sup> and

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6. The evaluation of prejudice toward Jews was done independently of the questions regarding Gerald L.K. Smith. In the interview proper the respondents were asked the following questions: How do you feel about the Jews? Do they have too much power? Are they a problem? Should anything be done about them? The answers were then evaluated according to definite criteria (see appendix) and classified as Strong Prejudice, Some Prejudice, Tolerant and Anti-Prejudice. For the purposes of analyzing relationships, the factor of attitude toward Jews was made dichotomous, strong and some prejudice being combined and tolerant and anti-prejudice combined.

whether they heard the speech. This relation is shown in the following table:

Table V				
Did you hear the speech?	Attitude toward Jews	Prejudice	No Prejudice	Total
Yes		19	13	32
No		14	12	26
		33	25	58

One conclusion may be inferred: namely, that there was no relationship between prejudice and attendance at the Smith meeting. Approximately the same proportions of those who were prejudiced and of those who were classed as unprejudiced heard the speech. This lack of relationship tends to substantiate the hypothesis that the address was a decisive factor for creating an approving attitude toward Smith, irrespective of whether a person was or was not prejudiced against Jews, and for reducing the number of men who were classed as neutral.

2. For several reasons the group classified as neutral in their attitude toward Smith may be the most interesting for our analysis. It was a large group, 20 out of a total sample of 58.

Half of these 20 did not hear the speech and were seemingly disinterested in Smith and the community controversy caused by the opposition of newspapers and civic groups. Essentially

this group was apolitical, and in addition, felt severed from genuine ties with the community. Their reaction was typical of disinterested spectators rather than of participants who identified with the local or larger community. This failure to identify with the community may be partly explained by their youth and by their lack of status in the town.

Politics - including the Smith episode - they considered to be an adults' problem. However, such an attitude of indifference had been bred by the failure of the pillars of the community to include the young men in their civic plans, and to give them the status of adults - in the area of employment, civic events, and politics.

Another important group, with a neutral attitude were those who were disappointed because the speech of Smith was so mild and non-controversial. The fact that he talked about Cross Roads history, his wife and old friends and only touched on issues that had been widely publicized detracted from his appeal. These men were 'itching' for trouble and were disappointed that "in the end, no shots were fired." They were similar to those who approved of Smith because he aroused negative suggestabilities, but differed in the respect that the first group felt some satisfaction in Smith's denouncement of various groups, whereas the others, expecting more of a rabid fiery appeal, found the speech dull. The publicity had prepared them for manical attacks by Smith on many groups, resulting in trouble and interference from the opposition.

The boomerang effect is obvious. This type of attitude may have serious implications for future neofascist movements which could exploit the latent resentments and hostilities of youth by an explicit and violent program of action. In short, this type of mentality prefers a violent rabble-rousing Gerald Smith to a friendly mild Native Son.

Those men in the neutral group who were classified as 'interested but confused' indicated an opposite reaction to Smith's speech. They found it difficult to form an opinion about the man since he appeared to contradict in his speech the adverse publicity which had been circulated about him. Who should they believe? Smith or the newspapers? However, their attitude was such that if Smith had been more explicit and less subtle in his attack on Jews, Progressives, etc., they would have disapproved of him. They differed from those in the 'favorable' group who also failed to catch the sarcasm of Smith's remarks in that they were willing to suspend judgment until they knew more about the man. They had a healthy skepticism but insufficient insight and political knowledge.

3. The small group of 12 men who expressed disapproval of Smith can be generally classified as skeptics with a healthy distrust for the shrewd smooth oratory of a demagogue. In addition to this fact, six of these men disapproved of Smith because they had some convictions that racial and religious prejudice was wrong, undemocratic. This anti-prejudiced

attitude is basic for an understanding of their receptivity to newspaper publicity which was deprivational of Smith and his racial views. Sharing the attitude of Smith's opposition they had a special frame of reference by which to evaluate the speech. The publicity prepared them to dislike Smith and to watch for indications, hints, in the speech that would confirm their opinion of the man. However, at this point we must be cautious, for others in the sample were also subjected to the same barrage of publicity and held a similar viewpoint regarding the danger of race prejudice, yet were favorable or neutral to Gerald L.K. Smith. Perhaps one could argue that these men actually did have prejudice in some latent form and therefore fell for Smith's line. Or we might reason that the crucial distinction was the fact that one group was politically more mature and enlightened than the others, therefore capable of discerning subtleties that the others would overlook.

Perhaps this problem can be partially answered by an analysis of the relation of prejudice to approval or disapproval of Smith.

Analysis of Factor of Prejudice

Table VI

Prejudice toward Jews	Attitude toward Smith	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	Total
Prejudice		19	10	4	33
No prejudice		7	10	8	25
		26	20	12	58



The chi-square for this table is 5.893, which with 2 degrees of freedom is somewhat above the 5% level. If we accept the 5% level as the level at which a chi-square is significant we must accept the hypothesis that this sample came from a universe where there was no relationship between prejudice and attitude toward Smith. However, the table does reveal that a higher proportion of the prejudiced men favor Smith, whereas among those classified as 'no prejudice' the proportions are about equal for favorable, neutral and unfavorable attitudes toward Smith. Obviously the factor of prejudice against the Jews is not a sufficient explanation for the respondents' attitude toward Smith.

Yet turning the question around, one may justifiably ask why the factor of prejudice did not clearly discriminate between those men who favored Smith and those who disapproved of him. To answer this it is necessary to examine the responses of those seven men who were coded as tolerant or anti-prejudiced and approved of Smith, and to analyze the comments of the four prejudiced men who disapproved of Smith.

1. In the first place, of those seven men who approved of Smith, all but one had heard his speech. This fact bears out the analysis made previously regarding the influence of Smith's speech. By toning down his racism and substituting other appeals, Smith was able to effectively win support among this group. For example, one of these men, a skilled radio mechanic, who was stirred by Smith's appeals to tradition, commented:



"I liked his speech. He talked about the old times for the last hundred years and how things have changed. He said nothing bad and didn't even talk about politics. It was such a good time."

(Interviewer: Did you like him?)

"Yes, I did. I couldn't understand all the trouble about it."

Four others in this group were of the opinion that Smith actually was not against Catholics or Jews. "He was s'posed to be against Catholics and Jews but I couldn't see that he was," or "He was supposed to be against them, but I don't think he was. I didn't hear him say anything like that and I listened closely," or "He said the papers always misunderstood him. That when he was talking against ministers or Jews he was just talking about individual cases, not all of them." "I thought he was a wonderful speaker. I liked him fine, but I didn't understand what the fuss was about."

As was noted previously, these respondents were highly impressed with Smith's dramatic oratory and personality. Finding 'nothing wrong' in his speech, i.e. no statements that explicitly confirmed the opposition's attacks on his racist views - they concluded that 'he must be alright'. In short, they preferred to discredit the publicity as propaganda rather than to devalue the sincerity or veracity of Smith's own statements.

How about the man who did not hear the speech and indicated some approval of Smith? Why was he not either neutral

or unfavorable to Gerald? In the first place, his approval of Smith was very mild, especially since he had little or no information with which to judge the man except for community rumors, and, in addition, had no interest in the controversy. Secondly, his mild approval seemed to be motivated by a strong dislike of the people in town who had spread rumors about Smith, thus helping him to identify with the speaker.

"Well, there are a few people in town - I call them gossipers - who began talking about him."

(Interviewer: What did they say?)

"Jesus, I don't know what it was all about. I don't know."

(Interviewer: What does he stand for?)

"I don't know."

(Interviewer: Who's he hooked up with?)

"I think he was with the Ku Klux Klan."

(Interviewer: What did you think of him?)

"I thought he was alright."

It should also be noted that of this group of seven men who approved of Smith only one was classified as 'anti-prejudiced,' the others being termed 'tolerant.' This fact indicates that it was easier for those with a more complacent attitude on the subject of anti-semitism to be won over by the personality of Smith, than for those who had firm convictions on the issue.

2. The next group which requires some analysis consists of those four men with prejudiced views toward Jews who disapproved of Smith. All of these men were classified as having only 'some prejudice' but none of them were strongly anti-semitic, thus further corroborating the view maintained above, that it is more difficult for those with extreme attitudes, i.e., those strongly prejudiced or anti-prejudiced, to bet on the wrong horse. The men who were either tolerant or somewhat prejudiced toward Jews were less predictable in their attitude toward Smith.

Only two of these four men heard the speech. One of them expressed disapproval of Smith's race mongering, although he indicated disinterest in the whole issue.

(Taxi driver, age 24, single, veteran, high school grad, with strong success conflict)

"He's hooked up with Bilbo and that racial supremacy crowd. I'll tell you what happened in this town. About 5% of the people got all heated up about it and the rest either didn't care or didn't give a damn. Take me, I don't give one damn."

(Interviewer: What did he say?)

"Well, he began to praise Cross Roads and its history - that's when I left."

(Interviewer: Who's he hooked up with?)

"He runs the America First Committee and he and Bilbo are buddies. I can't see this racial supremacy business and negro lynching. Well, I don't like the type of man he is, but he seemed to be a good speaker."

This fellow was disinterested not only in the controversy but also in the appeals Gerald Smith made to tradition and local sentiment. Although he voiced opposition to 'racial supremacy' he was not the type of person to organize opposition to a fascist demagogue. He 'didn't give a damn.' Also, in terms of his own prejudice to Jews, his attitude was not entirely inconsistent. If anything, his prejudiced views were ambivalent and confused, perhaps explaining his essential disinterest. For example, on subject of Jews, he states:

"Well, individually they're alright. As a group they're not. They're all out for themselves. When one is down another will stake him. That's the only reason they're bad."

(Interviewer: Are they a problem?)

"No."

(Interviewer: Should anything be done about them?)

"No, I don't think we should. Here's my opinion. The Jews run all the business and control the wealth. If we did anything about them, the whole economic system would collapse. The only thing I have against them is that they're clannish - one will always stake another in business and that's why they are where they are today."

However, his attitude toward Jews reveals a deep underlying anxiety and fear which could readily be turned into desperate aggression, provided he felt his status extremely threatened by Jews as the economic power group. In that case, his opposition to 'this racial supremacy business' would recede into the background and Gerald L.K. Smith might appear as the answer to his prayers.

The other man who heard Smith speak opposed him primarily because he was distrustful of a shrewd orator like Smith.

(Bartender, age 24, married and no children, high school grad, veteran, with some success conflict)

"Well he was s'posed to be against Catholics and Jews. He said he wasn't but everyonce in a while he'd bring it in when you didn't expect it. Most of the people couldn't tell it. The farmers were taken in on all that stuff."

(Interviewer: What did you think of him?)

"I think he's a terrific orator, but I don't think I'd trust him too far."

His attitude toward Jews was resentful but not dangerous.

He commented:

"They have plenty of power too. On this surplus stuff they got theirs. They're too damn good business men. They control the clothing industry. I was talking to \_\_\_\_\_ who sells surplus stuff here in town. He said he could get a certain item for \$5 before the Jews cornered it and now it's \$11. They get theirs."

(Interviewer: Should anything be done about them?)

"No, I don't think so. I guess in the end they're like most anybody."

This bartender is a good example of a man who has resentments, but also some insight into his own attitude, and who is not willing to carry his prejudices into a program of action that would jeopardize the democratic rights of Jews. For this reason, perhaps, he senses the danger of an agitator espousing racist views.

The two men who failed to hear the speech had different reasons for opposing Smith. The teacher's reaction was primarily motivated by personal resentments against the town leaders whom he identified as Gerald's friends.

(High school teacher, age 24, married and no children, college grad, with strong success conflict)

"I'm against him and I didn't even go to hear him for that reason. He's an America Firster and that's dangerous stuff. Let me tell you a story about that. I was away from town then and I came back the day Smith spoke, and what do you think they had done? They had put some soldiers in our place while I had gone and hadn't even asked me. And there wasn't anything I could do. The sheriff and mayor both passed me off. This is an awful town. I hate it here!"

(Interviewer: What does he stand for?)

"I think he's a communist."

This man's explanation of why he didn't attend the Smith meeting sounds more like a rationalization after the fact since in other civic events he showed an eagerness to dis-identify with the community. In any case, this episode helped him to identify Smith with the local big-wigs whom the teacher resented strongly. Also, his labeling of Smith as a communist indicates a negative rather than politicized attitude, which is typical of those who, in search of a derogatory label, used the term 'communist' without knowing its precise connotations.

The other prejudiced respondent who had not heard the speech based his disapproval on the opinion of people in town who disliked Smith. The description of Gerald was a 'race-

monger' and 'fascist' and gives no indication that the fellow understood the full implications of these terms. He was apparently not a 'political objector' but rather a conformist willing to ape the views of his associates.

(Unemployed, age 23, single, veteran, high school grad, with strong success conflict)

"I don't know what he means. All I know is people in town don't like him. I guess he's a race monger. All kinds of people went to see him though. He's a fascist."

(Interviewer: What's a fascist?)

"One group over all and exterminate the rest."

On subject of Jews he stated:

"They don't have much power now, but eventually they will. They're that type. If they weren't so clannish, it'd be alright. I like to judge people as individuals."

It is difficult to determine whether this fellow would have retained his negative attitude toward Smith if he had heard the speech. He was an insecure person, and apparently in throes of some kind of emotional adjustment to life. Also he indicated great guilt feelings toward his father. His greatest resentment was against big business and those with wealth, which might mean that a clever agitator could easily turn his resentments and hostilities against big business into an active hatred of 'Jewish capitalists.' However, this is sheer speculation. The important fact is that he did not hear Smith's Centennial address.

Failure of 'Hometown Boy' Appeal  
and of Appeals to Local Sentiments  
and Pride

One of the problems that occurs in the analysis of reactions of the respondents toward Gerald Smith concerns the question, Why were Smith's appeals to local pride largely ineffective for the group of men? After all, Gerald Smith was hailed by the committee as a former hometown boy and one might expect that this fact would be of crucial importance in determining a favorable reaction. The answer to this problem has been partially suggested but it deserves further elaboration.

In the first place, a group of eleven men approved of Smith because he gave "such a wonderful speech" and "really was a nice fellow", and in addition "didn't say anything out of line at all." For these men we might assume that Smith's attempts to reestablish himself in the eyes of Cross Roads as a worthy and respectable Native Son were effective. Smith's ability as an excellent orator and dramatist, combined with a skillful use of various appeals, were sufficiently successful to counteract the adverse newspaper propaganda. However, this group constitutes a definite minority within the sample, and only about half of the total number who approved of Smith.

Secondly, it was pointed out that of those men who approved of Smith twelve reacted favorably to the negative political phases of Smith's program (the fact that he was against Jews,



communists, crooked politicians and newspapers) and under-emphasized the other appeals in his speech. Smith's many references to his family and to Cross Roads history were accepted as superfluous. A comment that occurred frequently in these interviews was the following: "First of all, he told the people they were good and made them feel important. And then he said--". In addition, the interviews do not suggest that these men identified with Smith because he was a Native Son of Cross Roads. On the contrary, several of the men seemed to identify with him despite the fact that he was a Hometown Boy.

However, this does not imply that these men had no resentments against Smith's opposition within the community. For example:

"Oh there were some people around here who put up a kick about letting him come."

(Interviewer: Who were they?)

"Well, I'd rather not say, but it was the Catholics and unions. He was against them."

or

"A lot of people in town were against it. Schwartz was. He's a Jew- and he told his employees that if they went they'd get fired!.. He was supposed to be against Jews and that had something to do with it. I think the man was good."

Another fellow, in his eagerness to identify Smith's enemies as his own, mistakenly labeled three of Smith's supporters as "opposed to him but good." He remarked:

"Well, there are a few old ladies in town that don't like him - like that guy over there (points to the jeweler who was an old friend of Gerald's). They wanted to keep him out of town. Smith knows too much and he could tell a lot on the big boys like (cites the two prominent wealthy city fathers) that they don't want known- they're afraid of him and opposed to him but good."

From these and other comments one can infer that their identification with Smith and their resentment against his 'so-called' opposition were motivated by personal reasons and not by any sentiments of local pride. Smith represented for them the hero who could challenge the enemy, whether it be the city fathers, newspapers, unions, Catholics, Jews or communists.

Among those who were neutral to Smith the ineffectiveness of hometown appeals is more obvious. Their general reaction was that "he really didn't say much." For example:

"Well, he was against communists for one thing and I thought he talked very well there. Other than that, he didn't say too much except about the history of Cross Roads."

These men were unimpressed by hometown and sentimental appeals, perhaps for several reasons. First, there is the fact of newspaper publicity which played up Smith as a 'notorious rabble-rousing politician', creating specific attitudes of expectancy. Obviously Gerald L.K. Smith was more than a former Cross Roads resident. He was worthy of front page headlines due to his political activities. Thus, the reaction of disappointment and disinterest may have resulted from their

expectation that when a national figure like Smith comes to town he would talk about other things than the familiar. A few of them were rebels who would have enjoyed hearing Smith denounce 'big shots' in the town, but were disappointed that "he didn't even say anything bad about those who had opposed him." In this sense, Smith was not quite enough of a hero.

Secondly, there is the factor of age and the failure of these men to identify strongly with the community which made these special appeals of Smith ineffective. That is, the men because of their youth found appeals to sentimentality banal and uninteresting. Likewise, because of their low status in the town, the men could not respond with much fervor to appeals to local pride and tradition. Their attitude was 'O.K., but so what?' Several of these men frankly stated that they would prefer to live in another town, preferably a city, where there would be better job opportunities and where they could escape from small town gossip.

Finally, the group who disapproved of Smith indicated not only a negative reaction to his race mongering and demagogic tricks to win the audience sympathy, but also had some definite resentments against the faction who were responsible for securing Smith as the Centennial speaker. In general, these men regarded the machinations of the Committee either with contempt or amusement. They were unimpressed by the fact that Gerald Smith had once been a 'hometown boy', regarding such publicity as spurious. The important fact for their consider-

ation was that Smith was known as a disreputable politician who spread ideas of hate, distrust, and disunity and was thus no honor but rather a discredit to the community. A few excerpts from the interviews will illustrate their attitudes:

"A number of people in town knew him. He really didn't live here like they said. He was from Soldier's Grove and he lived here about four years - right here on Maple Street. They thought it would be a good idea to bring him here - that was just a few people. I'd say 90 per cent of the people wanted nothing to do with him. You'd find out if you took a poll."

"Now that's a story! (big laugh) Nobody knew what they were getting. About five old ladies that wear pants in this town got the bright idea and they brought him to town. Nobody else knew what was going on 'til one day they heard about it. That's when the top blew."

"About five guys in town took it upon themselves to run the whole thing and they lined up GLK Smith without consulting anyone at all."

In conclusion we may state that the angle of 'hometown boy' aimed at appealing to sentiments of local pride was not of decisive significance in determining a favorable attitude toward Gerald L.K. Smith. His success among those twenty-six men who indicated approval may be primarily attributed to the following factors: his oratorical ability, his skillful use of a variety of appeals, and his subtle appeal to negative suggestabilities and to latent hero worship tendencies. In addition, one may note the detrimental effect of Smith's appeals to hometown sentiments and local pride both among those who were neutral and unfavorable to Smith. Furthermore,

for the latter group the 'hometown boy' appeal was negated by either denying Smith such status (since he had lived in Cross Roads only while attending high school although his family had long resided in Vernon County) or by regarding the fact of residence as incidental to the central issues of the controversy.

#### Analysis of Level of Political Awareness

One of the startling facts revealed by an analysis of the interviews is the very low level of political information and awareness of the majority of the respondents. Their understanding of political issues was largely confined to a knowledge of headline news and of current political labels. For example, on the issue of Gerald L.K. Smith the men were asked, 'Who is he hooked up with?' Their replies are shown in the following table:

#### Who is he hooked up with?

Don't know . . . . .	27
America First Party . . . . .	10
Huey Long . . . . .	14
Ku Klux Klan . . . . .	3
Fascists . . . . .	1
Everything anti-American . . . . .	2
Communists . . . . .	<u>1</u>

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The important fact is that almost half of the group did not know the political affiliations of Gerald L.K. Smith. And of those who cited 'America First party' or 'Huey Long'

there was little indication that they understood the political implications of such an affiliation. Rather, their comments indicated merely an acquaintance with the newspaper labels.

Also, on the question 'What does he stand for?' twenty men said they didn't know; five said he was a communist; and nine thought he was only a politician or speaker. Such unpoliticized attitudes are, of course, important for understanding the reaction of the men toward Smith and for predicting the success of a future fascist movement. It is precisely the politically uninformed who can be led like sheep to the slaughter.

The failure of these men to develop mature political viewpoints may be traced to two principal conditions. First, is the fact that their primary source of information was the newspapers, e.g. the LaCrosse Tribune, Capital Times or Chicago Tribune. Most of the men read only one paper and few read more than the headlines, sports page and comics. The 'news behind the news', even if printed, escaped them. In addition, the local newspapers served as an inadequate source of information because of their failure to print complete news stories on national and international affairs and their reliance on sensationalism or editorial labeling. Secondly, the men took no active interest in any political organization, preferring to be passive spectators rather than active participants. In general they had a disinterest in and disdain for politics. Their membership in groups was restricted

to churches, fraternal orders, Junior Chamber of Commerce and to veterans' organizations like the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars, groups that offered little in terms of political education.

#### Analysis of the Age Cleavage in Cross Roads

The explanation for their general disinterest in politics may be best understood by taking a closer glance at their community. The most salient features of Cross Roads for such an analysis are the tension-producing factors of the prevailing power structure.

The Chamber of Commerce in the town is recognized as the group which makes all the important decisions regarding civic events, wages and hours scale, importation of new industries into the community etc. This group is comprised of the leading businessmen in the town, most of whom are over forty years of age. As a reaction against the arbitrary assumption of power by these few wealthy businessmen, the enterprising young men in town organized a Junior Chamber of Commerce and pressed for a civic recreation center, housing and importation of new industries. However, after considerable bickering their proposals were turned down.

Thwarted by the economic conservatism of the prominent older businessmen and retired farmers, and by the narrowmindedness and provincialism of the churches and major civic clubs, many of the younger men assumed an apathetic and resigned

attitude toward community affairs. 'What's the use?' was the characteristic response.

This gradual weakening of 'we-feelings' for the younger age group was heightened by the manipulative and secret atmosphere in which the power bloc made their decisions, which, in turn, intensified the growth of suspicions and the decline of mutual respect. Since good primary group relations are important for determining the substructure of civic and democratic sentiments, it is not surprising that a breakdown in these relations in the community helped breed among the younger group attitudes of cynicism, disinterest and diffuse resentments. Thus the cleavage between young and old is an important conditioning factor for explaining the political attitudes of the respondents, i.e. their apathy, or cynicism, toward politics, which in turn affects the level of their political awareness; the resentment of some against the Centennial committee and the willingness of many of the men to follow a leader who could articulate their anxieties and hostilities and direct them against the powers that be.

#### Implications of Study for Fascist Movement

What are the potentialities in Cross Roads for a fascist movement taking root among the group of men interviewed? The question is not purely academic since Gerald L.K. Smith is politically interested in the community and anxious to establish a firm foothold there.



During August of 1947 he was invited to attend a private dinner given in his honor, at which time he was presented with a diamond ring as a token of the Centennial committee's gratitude. At this dinner, attended by approximately forty men, prominent in the community, Smith gave the address. Unlike the Centennial speech, this talk was 'off the record' and typical of Smith's notorious political harangues. His continual paranoid references to Jews assured the listener unmistakably of Smith's position on that issue.<sup>7</sup> Following the speech, the members of the group were invited to sign up for literature concerning the Christian Nationalist organization. Almost all of those present at the meeting signed their John Henrys. Since then, each member on the list has been receiving free a monthly issue of The Cross and the Flag and a weekly copy of Smith's newsletter. Thus the seeds have been planted. Whether Smith can reap a harvest of converts in Cross Roads within the next few years will depend, of course, on many factors. So far, his most active supporters in the town have been a group of older respectable businessmen, some of them former buddies of Smith. The young people and working class have been excluded from the inner circle.

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7. Smith's talk directed at a 'screened' audience is a good example of the selective use of appeals according to the audience-situation. The 'psuedo' speech for the Centennial can then be set in contrast to the 'real-stuff' of this private address, hence the duality of Smith's public. Those on the inside were allowed to hear the 'low-down' whereas the general public was given a diet rationed for the occasion.

In one sense, Cross Roads is atypical since in other communities where Smith has built up support, Gerald has had to sneak in by the back door and has recruited few of his followers from the higher respectable status groups. Yet perhaps in other respects Cross Roads is not unusual, since youth generally has shown less interest in his movement than other age groups. As Smith himself admitted in his 'private' talk, most of his support has come from the rural regions with a strong fundamentalist religious background, from the middle-age groups and lower income brackets, and from the urban centers where there has been considerable discontent caused by communist labor strife.

Unfortunately it was impossible, within the time limits of the field study, to obtain any specific information on the group of older businessmen who strongly support Gerald L.K. Smith in Cross Roads. For that reason the attempt to analyze the potentialities for a fascist movement developing in the town must be confined to the group of fifty-eight young men studied. The question then becomes: From an analysis of their attitude toward Smith can we make any valid predictions regarding the possible success of a Christian Nationalist or similar movement among this group?

Certain observations may be noted. First, there is the group of men (comprising about one third of the sample) with strong resentments against Jews and with considerable conflict

about success strivings who are prepared to accept Smith's leadership, particularly if he plays up the angle of Jewish-capitalist exploitation and the resulting threats to the isolated individual. They are a group bewildered by the trend of events in the world, frustrated by the lack of job opportunities and by the low wage scale in the community and resentful against the prevailing mores of a semi-sacred rural town. Unlike many of the older generation, these men have no desire to return to the past, the old ways.

Many of them, having experienced rather rigid authority in the home and the church, have ambivalent attitudes toward authority. On the one hand, they are rebellious, with no respect for tradition as such and at the same time they are seeking for guidance and restraint, with emotional dependency on some type of authoritarian discipline.

As veterans they have had an opportunity to escape from the strict moral surveillance of a small town and have little appetite for fundamentalist Lutheran preachers who preach about the evils of tobacco, liquor, sex and movies. Unwilling to seek salvation in religion (at least as they have known it), they are groping for other answers. Although many of them expressed hostility toward either or both big business and labor unions, their ideas remained uncrystallized in terms of any political program. They are the driftwood in the political stream, without orientation or active membership in any political association.

It is with this group of young men that a psuedo social protest movement has its greatest opportunity for organization. Will Gerald Smith's program fill the bill? If Smith or a similar fascist leader can arouse the latent hostilities and resentments of these men and channelize them into direct political action with vulnerable groups such as the Jews and communists as the personalized targets and scapegoats; if the program can capitalize on the economic and social gripes of these men and offer some type of solution that is more than a return to the past and to 'old-fashioned' Christianity; and if the leader can articulate the fears and anxieties of the group and at the same time provide ways and means of releasing their tensions, this group of men would be likely to give their willing and active support to Smith's party.

This prediction assumes that no important changes will drastically improve their economic situation or revise their attitudes in the next two or three years, an assumption which is not improbable considering the dangerous trend of events today. Yet, it is precisely the intrusion of outside variables that makes prognosis difficult if not impossible. One can only state that given conditions of severe unrest, tension and fear, when men call into question the very basis of their established order, there is a high probability that such a group of malcontents would be favorable fodder for the grist mill of a fascist movement, such as the Christian Nationalist party. Whether such an event will actually take place is

beyond the scope of empirical inquiry, since it assumes prophetic knowledge of factors which fall beyond the pale of the writer's information. To enumerate only a few of the question marks: the possibility of war or of a war economy; of deflation and of a prolonged economic depression.

However, in assessing the special significance of this study we must examine other factors. Perhaps, the most revealing insight is suggested by the age-cleavage in the community which may be crucial for determining differential attitudes among the young and old.

In the analysis of the speech of Gerald L.K. Smith it was noted that the appeals were addressed primarily to the traditional rural middle-class, steeped in the values of fundamentalistic Christianity and the liberal ideology. The Centennial address was aimed at mobilizing the phobias and resentments of a group who felt threatened by the forces of secularization - Hollywood, atheists, progressives, intellectuals and un-American immigrants of the metropolitan centers. Nativist appeals to primary group values were utilized for emphasizing this separation of the we-group from all out-groups, thus intensifying the phobias and resentments of the rural middle-class against 'strangers' and their strange new-fangled ideas. Hence, the speech was largely intended for an audience of older people who shared the primary group values of the rural tradition and who resisted ideas of change and progress. Unlike Hitler, Gerald L.K. Smith appealed to the middle-age

groups and not specifically to youth. This fact may be of great significance in locating the potential source of support for an American fascist movement.

It is, of course, true that many of the young men were also insecure and uneasy about their future. Yet the data suggest that their resentments were in large part motivated by a rebellion against the rural tradition with its emphasis on fundamentalistic religion, piety and social conservatism, and not against the forces of secularization. In the economic realm they felt frustrated by the lack of job opportunities, a condition which in part they blamed on the elders of the community who refused to accede to youths' demands. Thus the value references of the two age groups were polar opposites.

The fact that Gerald Smith was effective in winning approval among several of the men interviewed does not invalidate this proposition. Rather, he was effective because he also used a variety of appeals and allowed the audience to interpret the symbols according to their own frame of reference. For this group of youth Smith represented a hero who could challenge the authority and traditions that shackled their freedom. For the older people, we might assume that Smith was the symbol for challenging all forces that sought to undermine the past and traditional values.

However, in general, Smith in his speeches and writings concentrates on a few selective themes designed for a middle-aged middle-class audience. Because of this fact, we could

logically infer that Smith is most effective in securing support from older people rather than from youth. Although he may be successful in coralling some dissident youth to his cause, the bulk of his support may be expected to come from the middle-aged groups in the ranks of the middle-class, a fact conceded by Smith in his appraisal of the potential membership of the Christian Nationalist movement.

Another point of major significance suggested by the study concerns the differential effects of propaganda on an audience.

First, from the negative point of view, one can note the boomerang effect of the newspaper publicity among a certain group of the young men. Although this result may be inevitable when propaganda is aimed at a highly heterogeneous audience, nevertheless, it does suggest the danger of slanting news stories in a derogatory manner by the technique of labels and smears, thereby antagonizing some of the readership who may react adversely, not to the man deprecated, but to the newspaper. The danger of the publicity backfiring is increased when the audience has no frame of reference with which to evaluate Smith or the attacks against him. Since the newspapers, in the situation studied, did not publish any instructive story about Gerald L.K. Smith and his various political activities, the reader was faced with the choice of relying on the editorial bias of the newspaper for forming his opinion or to discount the news stories as 'propaganda' and use as evidence other sources of information, i.e., friends, gossip, the testimony of Gerald L.K. Smith, Henry Ford, etc.

Furthermore, the derogatory labels used in the publicity could have meaning only if the audience understood the implications of such terms as 'America First party', and 'fascist' and shared the sentiments of the newspaper that 'race-baiting' and 'rabble-rousing' were wrong, undemocratic. Yet the evidence suggests that many of the men had only vague notions about what the America First party stood for and, despite the fact that a war had just been fought against fascism, had meager ideas regarding the nature of such an ideology. In short, due to a lack of understanding of political events and trends, the labels were on the whole an ineffective method of conveying a negative impression of Gerald L.K. Smith. Also, within the sample there were men who accepted race-baiting and rabble-rousing as legitimate activities. Obviously, for them such terms did not place Smith in an unfavorable light.

In addition, the evidence suggests that the boomerang effect was heightened by the oversimplification of the publicity and of the opposition's attacks in general. By underestimating the skill and intelligence of a fascist demagogue and overestimating the political astuteness of the readers, the opposition did not prepare the audience for the subtleties and oratorical tricks of Gerald Smith. Rather, the young men expected loud, vicious attacks on various minority groups and many were 'dumbfounded' by Smith's failure to fulfill the stereotype of America's No. 1 Race-Hater and Rabble-Rouser. Thus the newspapers, in overplaying their hand, made it easier for Smith to win the audience approval. By denying the slurs



and charges, and by claiming to be an upright American citizen and a worthy Native Son who upheld rural values, Smith was able to effectively break the impact of the opposition's attacks.

These facts demonstrate the danger of combatting racist propaganda by labels, sensationalism and oversimplification rather than by fair, instructive sober journalism. This is especially true when the audience lacks a political frame of reference with which to evaluate the derogatory labels, and when the man who is attacked is given an opportunity to appeal to the same audience and deny the charges. All may be fair in love and war - and politics, but undoubtedly certain techniques have greater psychological value for securing victory than others. Resorting to the level of name-calling, the time-honored device of demagogues, does not necessarily strengthen the case of the liberal democrats, but may merely increase the cynicism and apathy of the audience, pushing them further into the fascist camp.

In conclusion, a further note of caution may be relevant at this point. If, as citizens, we are sincere in our desire to strengthen democratic values, we must probe deeper into the source of the defection, and not be content with concluding our efforts with anti-racist propaganda. Of course, wise and sound counter-propaganda is essential, but it is insufficient if the forces making for a fascist mentality are left unchecked. The impetus for any major social protest movement lies in the fact that men are dissatisfied with their lot in life, a dissatisfaction which results from the failure of life to

conform to their expectations of it. The young men in Cross Roads who were described as potential supporters of fascism felt frustrated by the lack of good job opportunities, housing and low social status in the community. As young Americans they were brought up to believe that they could expect certain opportunities for success, and finding those aspirations difficult of achievement they reacted by feelings of hostility and resentment toward groups believed to be powerful and thus responsible for their own failure of achievement.

A constructive positive approach to the problem must tackle not only the failure of the community to nurture civic virtues and democratic sentiments, but also the basic inequities and maladjustments of our contemporary capitalist society, the breeding ground for a fascist mentality. For the problem is not unique to Cross Roads or to small towns, but has ramifications for the entire nation. The present political situation offers little hope for a fair assessment and appraisal of our monopoly capitalist economy, or for any political action program designed to bring the system into a more equitable balance. Yet, despite the difficulties, that is the general broad approach that seems necessary if we are to eradicate the source of the fascist mentality. It will take men of courage and of good will who can face up to the challenge, recognizing that there is no easy escape from the dilemma of our time, and few sign posts to point the way. The Gerald Smiths and their Christian Nationalist parties are not only a threat to democratic liberties, but also a challenge to the liberals' ingenuity, resourcefulness and stamina.

A P P E N D I X

### The Sample

Selection of the sample of fifty-eight men, ages 20 to 30, was made by compiling a list of names of all male graduates from Cross Roads high school between 1935 and 1945, and supplementing that list with names obtained from the selective service records that were filed in the County Court House. The lists were then cross-checked by three young men in the community in order to determine how many of these men were residing in town that summer. After making corrections for those who had migrated elsewhere and for those who were recent residents of Cross Roads, the list was completed, giving a total of about 143 men in the specified age range. The final sample represents over one-third of the total universe, and thus would seem to be reliable.

The men were contacted at their homes or jobs and no brothers were included in the sample. All of the men were of the protestant faith. The ethnic distribution is as follows:

#### Ethnic Origin

Norwegians . . . . .	29
Germans . . . . .	3
Yankees . . . . .	26
(of Irish, English, Scotch descent)	<u>58</u>

The educational level of the respondents is indicated by this table:

#### Educational Level

8 to 11 years . . . . .	12
high school graduate . . . .	32
college-6 months to 2 years	<u>14</u>
	58

The age range for the sample is shown in the table below:

<u>Age Range</u>	
20-23 years . . . . .	30
24-30 years . . . . .	28
	<u>58</u>

### Criteria for Evaluating Prejudice Toward Jews

#### Strongly Prejudiced

1. Expresses feeling that some rights of the Jews in the United States should be abridged, i.e., restriction of power, money, or civil rights; expulsion from the country, or segregation; but may or may not specify form of action to be taken.
2. Expresses strong antipathy toward Jews.

#### Prejudiced

1. Expresses feeling that Jews either have too much power or are a problem and is resentful of fact.
2. Feels nothing should or can be done about it and be democratic; or is non-committal.
3. Expresses some antipathy toward Jews.

#### Tolerant

1. May or may not express feeling that Jews have too much power or are a problem, but does not resent their status.
2. Feels nothing should be done to abridge their rights as citizens. 'They are entitled to the same rights as others.'

3. May express some sympathy for/or understanding of Jews; or may express mixed feeling - sympathy and antipathy (ambivalence)

#### Anti-Prejudiced

1. Recognizes implications of anti-semitism for democratic society.
2. Strongly opposed to all measures to restrict rights of Jews.
3. Expresses some sympathy or understanding for Jews and no antipathy.

#### Criteria for Determining Success Conflict

##### Presence of Conflict

1. Strong conflict -- success norms interiorized. The individual has interiorized the norms as ownership of business, respectability, high esteem for professions and large income, but senses a great difficulty in achieving that type of success for himself.
2. Some conflict -- success norms interiorized. The individual has interiorized the same norms as those with a strong conflict but expresses the conflict with less intensity.

##### Absence of Conflict

1. No conflict -- success norms only partially or not interiorized. The individual sees success as esteem for manual labor over other occupations, the unimport-

ance of a large income and of high social status for himself and the positive valuation of happiness (contentment with doing a good job without chasing the dollar).

2. No conflict -- norms interiorized. The individual sees success as ownership of business, respectability, profession and large income and senses no difficulty in achieving that type of success for himself.

Table analyzing relationship between attitude toward Jews, toward Smith and whether or not they heard the speech

Heard Speech	Attitude toward Jews	Prejudiced			Not Prejudiced			Total
	Attitude toward Smith	Favor- able	Neutral	Un- favor- able	Favor- able	Neutral	Un- favor- able	
Yes		14	3	2	6	3	4	32
No		5	7	2	1	7	4	26
Total		19	10	4	7	10	8	58

This multiple classification table bears out the analysis shown by the three tables used in the text. That is, it indicates that prejudice was not a selective factor in determining whether a respondent did or did not hear Smith's speech; that prejudice, toward Jews, however, was one selective factor in determining a favorable attitude toward Smith; and that the speech itself was decisive for creating an approving attitude toward Smith.

APPROVED:

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